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Conversion of African Americans to Islam:
A Sociological Analysis of the Nation of Islam
And Associated Groups

Nuri Tinaz

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ABSTRACT

'Conversion of African Americans to Islam: A Sociological Analysis of the Nation of Islam Associated groups' is an empirical study of the religious experience of people who had/have distinctive features in terms of race, ethnicity and historical experience. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate how African Americans' (AAs) conversion experience in general, and the Nation of Islam associated groups' conversion in particular, differ from the studies of recruitment and conversion in the sociology of religion and New Religion Movements (NRMs). More specifically, their recruitment and conversion experiences to Islam diverge from those who converted to mainstream Islam. The study investigates how AAs' historical experience, socio-economic difficulties and the racism they encountered shaped and influenced their religious understanding.

Research methods involved participant observations, a survey questionnaire, interviews, conversations, personal communications and correspondence. To collect ethnographic data eleven months field research was conducted mainly in the Chicago area and on two short visits to Detroit, and three years continued communications with Muslim officials and academics in the area. During the field research and afterwards through personal communication 181 survey questionnaire responses were received, and 23 Muslim officials, academics and ordinary Muslims were interviewed through semi-structured, unstructured interviews, conversation and correspondence.

The thesis begins with a brief history of Islam and Muslims in general and the African American Muslims (AAMs) in particular. More emphasis is given on the historical development of the Nation of Islam (NOI). Then in Chapter III, discussions of schisms in the history of the NOI are examined from sociological perspectives of social and religious movements. In Chapter IV I aimed to formulate my own perspective to analyse and study the conversion experiences of AAMs to Islam. I used a multivariate approach, considering selectively widely held conversion and recruitment theories in the sociology of the religion. I consider in Chapter V the predisposing conditions for AAMs that influence their decision-making to join in the NOI, for example, political and nationalistic sentiments and socio-economic deprivations. In Chapter VI I have applied different terms to describe their religious experiences, such as conversion, alteration and reversion. I have analysed further their encounters with the NOI, the methods of recruitment they used and their major motives for joining the NOI and converting to Islam. In the concluding chapters (Chapter VII VIII) I describe the different responses of AAMS to Islam following the death of Elijah Muhammad. It is found out that the Islamic appeal has polarised. While Farakhan's NOI appeared to continue the tradition and style of the old NOI with the emphasis on nationalistic and socio-economic factors, Imam W. D. Mohammed's community turned more to the religious and spiritual aspects of Islam. These different approaches led to a polarisation of the appeal of Islam to AAMS.

This thesis contributes to knowledge in four key areas; the sociology of religion and religious movements, the sociology of social and nationalistic movements, religious and Islamic studies.

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	African American
AAM	African American Muslims
ADL	Anti-Defamation League
CGG	Coalition for Good Government
CROE	Coalition of Remembrance of Elijah
CORE	Coalition of Racial equality
FOI	Fruit of Islam
GCC	General Civilisation Classes
ICNA	Islamic Circle of North America
ISCKON	International Society for Krishna Consciousness
ISNA	Islamic Society of North America
JDL	Jewish Defence League
JW	Jehovah's Witnesses
LFNOI	Lost-Found Nation of Islam
MAS	Muslim American Society
MGT	Muslim Girls Training
MMInc	Muslim Mosque Incorporation
MIWDM	Ministry of Imam W.D. Mohammed
MST	Moorish Science Temple
MMM	Million Man March
NAACP	National Association of Advancement Colored People
NIA	National Islamic Assembly
NOI	Nation of Islam
NOIFP	Nation of Islam Five Percenters
NRM	New Religious Movements
OAAU	Organisation of African American Unity
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him
POWER	People Organized and Working for Economic Rebirth
SNCC	Student Non-violent Co-ordination Committee
UC	Unification Church
UNIA	United Negro International Advancement / Garveyite Movement
WCIW	World Community of al-Islam in the West

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.1. A Brief Historical Background of Muslims in the United States

The history of Muslims in North America can be traced back several centuries. It is almost impossible to document the first Muslim arrival in the New World. There is some hypothesis that Muslims arrived in the Americas in the pre-Colombian period (A. Muhammad, 1984; Nyang, 1988, 1993; Gomez, 1994). However, the arrival of Islam in the New World dates back to the Atlantic slave trade when many African Muslims began to arrive on the American shore. This unfortunate trade in human cargo from Africa was the single most important vehicle for the pre-nineteenth century transportation of Muslims to the Americas. Some of those Muslims were more visible than other slaves. There were some nobles and literate Muslims in terms of Islamic knowledge and Arabic. But they could not find suitable circumstances to practise their religion. The religion of Islam survived only during the lifetime of individual Muslims who tried to hold on to their religious and cultural practices. Only a few vestiges of Islam were left as 'memoirs' (Hervieu-Léger, 1993) from this period (Austin, 1984; Nyang, 1988, 1993; Gomez, 1994).

The second phase in the arrival of Islam started from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. This was a turning point in the chronology of the Muslim presence in America as it marked the voluntary immigration of Muslims from various parts of the Muslim World, such as Syria, Iraq, Egypt, India, the (former) Soviet Union, Turkey and the Balkan countries (A. Muhammad, 1984; Haddad, 1986). Unlike the first phase, they came in search of the 'North American Dream' and were more concerned with finding a comfortable economic niche in America rather than propagating their religion. The early immigrants came to the US partly as result of political unrest developing within the Ottoman Empire, and a small but growing number of Syrian and Lebanese Arabs began to seek their fortunes elsewhere. At the beginning of this mass emigration, the great

majority from the Ottoman Empire were Christian Arabs. But an increasing number of Muslim Arabs reluctantly sailed out of the Middle East for the New World. These hesitant Muslims were gradually replaced by adventurous Muslims who wanted to go to the US in the hope of striking it rich quickly and then returning home. However, many of these men never went back home. These immigrants settled in different areas of the US, depending upon economic opportunities and the localities in which relatives and friends were living, such as New York, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, California, etc. With little education and lack of proficiency in English, they remained on the periphery of American society, peddling their wares or seeking employment as low-level industrial and agricultural labourers (Muhammad, 1984; Nyang, 1988).

From the beginning of the twentieth century onwards the number of Muslim immigrants increased significantly from the Balkan countries and the Soviet dominated areas of the Caucasus and Central Asia. They settled mostly in New York and New Jersey. Another early group of Muslim migrants in this period who came in search of the 'North American Dream' and settled in the US were the Muslims from the subcontinent, in British India (Haddad, 1986; Nyang, 1988). Another factor resulting in them leaving their country of origin was religious persecution. A large number of followers of Muslim sects such as the Baha'i Faith and the Ahmadiya movement, which were regarded by orthodox Muslims as 'heretical,' were persecuted in dominantly mainstream Muslim countries such as Pakistan and Iran and were forced to emigrate from their country of origin. Therefore, they came to the New World to spread their message (Bousquet, 1935; Braden, 1959). The Ahmadiya movement, particularly, played an important part among African Americans' (AAs) conversion to Islam in the 1920s (Turner, 1986, 1997).

The last phase of Muslim immigration took place between 1947 and the mid-1960s and it reflected changing social and political circumstances in Muslim countries. Unlike the earlier immigrants, Muslims who left their homes during this period did so in order to escape political, ideological and cultural persecution and most of them were from influential families and well educated. They included Palestinians, Egyptians, Iraqis and

Syrians. The Balkan Muslims also, more or less, left their homes to escape from socialist regimes (Haddad, 1986).

However, Muslim emigration from the Muslim World in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries did not lead to extensive contact, much less religious proselytising, between Muslims and AAs. The potential appeal of Islam for Black Americans was initiated most actively by Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912), a Presbyterian minister and minister for the state of Liberia, who lectured widely in the United States. He concluded, in his book *Christianity, Islam, the Negro Race* (1888), 'about the racial issue of Christians and Muslim missionaries in Africa, and Islam had a much better record of racial equality than did Christianity' (Raboteau, 1987:98). The first recorded account of voluntary conversion to Islam of an American is that of Muhammad Alexander Russell Webb, a journalist who worked as a diplomat at the American Consul in Manila. He was converted by two Indian Muslims. On his return to the US, he founded institutions such as *American Islamic Propaganda*, *Oriental Publishing Company* and a periodical called *The Muslim World* in 1893 (Akbar, 1984).

Before Webb's death, in 1916, Islam began to emerge as a religious and nationalistic phenomenon among AAs. For them, Islam was an alternative solution to the apparent conflict between Christian teachings and the racist behaviour of White American Christians. To do so, they abandoned Christianity as a religion for Whites and tried to form and develop another religion for Blacks. The most significant and consistent form of this conflation of racial, national and religious identities was the formation of, first, the Moorish Science Temple (MST) and later on, the Nation of Islam (NOI).

African-American Muslims (AAMs) in nineteenth century America had either been born into Muslim families or converted to their religion in Africa or - if American born - were the children of slaves who had been Muslims in Africa. But the religion of twentieth century AAMs like other Black religious movements seems to have emerged as a protest and reaction to racism in a nationalistic way (Baer and Singer, 1992) within the socio-economic and political circumstances of the Black ghettos, rather than have

derived from any vestiges of earlier Islam among the slaves. However, there is a possibility and an emotional and psychological assumption among various AAM groups that their roots lay in the vestiges of Islam from the slave trade, and that the tradition was handed down as 'a memory' (Hervieu-Léger, 1994) in a weak chain from generation to generation (E. Muhammad, 1957, 1965; Fauset, 1977; Wilson, 1993). When Islam reappears among people who, at the beginning of this century, were called 'Negroes' it has no exact apparent continuity with the (Orthodox Islam) past.

It is likely that much of the appeal and credibility of movements like those of the MST and the NOI was the consequence of these social, political and religious movements. These movements repeatedly made reference to the historical fact that many Africans who were brought in slavery chains to North America were Muslims (Lincoln, 1973; A.Muhammad, 1984; Nyang; 1993). After all, if the religion of Islam reappeared in the twentieth century, in different forms and aspects in North America with a solid foothold and indeterminate future, it is because of Elijah Muhammad and the initial credit must be given to him alone. As Lincoln says, 'after more than a hundred years, 'orthodox Islam' in America had not titillated the imagination of the masses, White or Black, and was scarcely known to exist before the 'Black Muslims' - Elijah's Nation of Islam - proclaimed Elijah's "Message to the Black Man" in the name of Allah' (Lincoln, 1983:221).

So far, I have been trying to document and give a brief historical background of factors which led to the presence of Muslims in the United States, particularly, to find out the historical roots of the AAMs which later gave rise to some of the religious based social protest movements such as the MST and the NOI. In the next section of this chapter, I will review the history of the AAMs who came into view as a social movement like its predecessor, the MST. The attention, in this second section, will be on the brief historical development of the NOI. Before moving to review the history of AAMs it would be better to indicate both the main focus of the thesis and the outline of chapters.

In this thesis, the conversion and recruitment experiences of AAs who converted a particular form of Islam, the NOI or African American Islam will be analysed. Their experiences will be examined and analysed for two distinct periods, the Hon. Elijah Muhammad's era (1946-1975) and the period after his death where the appeal of Islam has been polarised along with transformations, reforms and differentiations in organisational, ideological and policy objectives (see Chapters VII and VIII). Each period and context appears to constitute sometimes different and sometimes modified and transformed religious, political and organisational objectives. These interchangeable and divergent features have affected the NOI's appeal to the AAs, its membership, its recruitment grounds and conversion experiences. For this reason, it is intended that data collected through survey questionnaires, participant observation, interviews and conversations will shed light on how the NOI's religious, political, economic and organisational rhetorics and policies have evolved and changed over the years; how the social status of its membership has altered and how recruitment strategies and networks have been developed.

1.2. Outline of Chapters

This introductory chapter has provided a brief review of the history of Islam and Muslims in the United States. In particular, it has given emphasis to the historical development of Islam among AAs as a specific cultural and identity resistance and reaction against their historical experiences, racism and the 'system'. Moreover, this chapter is further divided into three sub-sections in order to examine the movement in: (i) the early period, (ii) Malcolm X's era, and (iii) following Malcolm until the death of Elijah Muhammad, the institutional founder of the movement.

The second chapter deals with research methodology including details of my research how the data were collected and what kinds of problems were encountered. The methods involved participant observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, informal conversations, survey questionnaire, and my involvement in social activities.

The third chapter examines the schisms, splits and infighting that have always been a part of the historical development of the NOI. These issues are analysed specifically from the sociological perspective. Earlier studies did not give enough priority to the schisms and splits and did not analyse them at length. I argue that the causes of schism were not simply religious and ideological but they also derived from the organisational, socio-economic and interactional factors, which contributed to their occurrences.

The fourth chapter contains a discussion of the theoretical issues of conversion and recruitment. In this chapter, widely held conversion and recruitment theories and models in the sociology of religion are examined; the conceptual analyses of terms used in accounting for the phenomenon, different models and approaches to conversion are also discussed. I argue that conversion of AAs to Islam is a complex phenomena issue and requires adopting a multivariate approach that considers selective perspectives.

The fifth chapter launches the substance of my research. I examine my informants: members who joined the NOI under Elijah Muhammad's leadership, the socio-economic problems and circumstances they were in, their previous political, ideological and religious inclinations prior to their joining the movement; and their demographic variables such as age, sex, education, occupation, religiosity, etc. The responses of my informants for this period are analysed in two historical categories in order to show the organisational development and changes of the NOI, the social stratification of the people to which it appealed and attracted.

Chapter VI continues to analyse my informants' responses in this period. In this chapter, I discuss the religious experiences of the respondents and how they view their conversion experiences. It also demonstrates how and through which channels the respondents encounter the NOI, what aspects of the movement attracted them, and what were their reasons and motives for recruitment to the movement. Again, responses are analysed in two periods comparatively to show the movement's organisational patterns, teachings and programmes that influenced the above issues. Moreover, this chapter displays how the respondents' motives varied with gender, education and time.

The seventh chapter considers the organisational and ideological changes of the NOI since the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975 and contains Imam W. D. Mohammed's initiatives and reforms to bring the NOI in to both mainstream Islam and American society. It also shows how the NOI members from the Elijah Muhammad era reacted to these reforms and changes, and eventually created splits from late 1975 onwards.

Chapter VIII examines new and recent African American Muslims (AAMs) who converted to two different versions of Islam, Imam W. D. Mohammed's moderate and mainstream Islamic teachings, and Minister Farrakhan's more nationalistic, socio-economic and moral understanding of Islam. It displays how Islam's appeals and attractions polarised according to the teachings, programmes and objectives of these two communities. This chapter also shows how the respondents' demographic variables differed from those who joined during the Elijah Muhammad period, in general, and how demographic variables of the adherents in these communities slightly changed and varied. It especially demonstrates how my informants' predisposing orientations influenced their conversion and affected their motives. Moreover, it shows how these communities' organisational and ideological patterns affected the respondents' decision making process and motives. I conclude by assessing my research findings and draw some points that are worth further to study.

1.3. The Moorish Science Temple of America (MST)

The first important well-organised AAM group in the twentieth century was the MST. It was founded around 1913, in Newark, NJ, by forty-seven years old Noble Drew Ali, who had been born in North Carolina (Bontemps and Conroy, 1945; Fauset, 1977; Wilson, 1989, 1993). Over the next decade from this seed grew a movement that, at its peak, had founded temples in several cities such as Detroit, New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh and in many major cities across the South. Ali moved his headquarters from Newark to Chicago, IL by 1925. It is estimated roughly that active membership in that movement reached between 20,000 and 30,000 during his lifetime (Turner, 1986).

However, he had little formal education and he apparently had limited knowledge of the basic facts about oriental religious thought and Islam (Lincoln, 1973; Fauset, 1977). Although his movement was patterned more on a combination of oriental philosophies than a normative Islam, N. D. Ali's aim was to find the means of uniting AAs in the United States. His specific answer to the Black people's condition in a country dominated by White people was to seek psychic escape and a way out of it by changing the symbols of Black culture and establishing identification with an oriental nostalgia and religion. At that time, AAs were beginning to emerge from the shadow of slavery, and for them the role of religion had always played a variety of functions. Fauset has observed that Black Americans' traditionally high religious participation was, in part, the result of the lack of other channels open to them. His work suggests that religious cults or movements provided Blacks with the chance to participate 'in an atmosphere free from embarrassment or apology, a place where they may experiment in activities such as business, politics, social reform and social expression' (Fauset, 1977:107-8). Their participation in these kinds of activities was often motivated by a racial or nationalist urge. Though in the view of orthodox Muslims, the MST was thought to be heretical it was the first organisation to spread awareness of Islam as an alternative to Christianity among Black Americans.

In pursuing these aims for Black Americans, Ali did not allow himself to be troubled by the possibly inconvenient facts of history; instead, he simply began giving them a new original and national identity. 'Knowledge of Self' was the key to salvation, according to him. He claimed that he had been sent by Allah to restore AAs' knowledge of true identity, nationality, true religion - Islam - , and true genealogy: Asiatic and the descendants of Moabites or Canaanites (A. Muhammad, 1984; Turner, 1986)⁽¹⁾. Fauset, for instance, points out that Ali

Became obsessed with the idea that salvation for the Negro people lay in the discovery by them of their national origin, i.e. they must know whence they came, and refused longer to be called Negroes, Black folk, colored people, or Ethiopians. They must henceforth call themselves Asiatic, to use the generic term, or more specifically, Moors or Moorish Americans (Fauset, 1970:47).

He, therefore, believed that before people can have a God, they must have a nationality. N. D. Ali, who claimed to be a prophet ordained by God, gave his people the North

African State of Morocco as their nation. The Moors paid great significance to names and words. The word 'Ethiopian signifies a division, Negro (Black) means death, and colored signifies something that is painted'. Ali argues that 'name means everything; by taking the Asiatic's from him and calling him Negro, Black, colored, or Ethiopian, the European stripped the Moor of his power, his authority, his God and every other worthwhile possession' (Fauset, 1977:47; Turner, 1993). On the contrary, each religion has its race of followers. He attributed some religions to certain races. 'Christianity is for the European (paleface); Islam is for the Asiatic (olive skinned persons). When each group has its own peculiar religion, there will be peace on earth' (*Ibid*).

To approve the ethnic and racial transformation and inward change of identity and symbols, N. D. Ali issued a 'Nationality and Identification Card' to his followers so that they could become full members of the cult. Each card was stamped with the Islamic Symbol of 'the Star and Crescent', accompanied by an image of clasped hands and a circumscribed number 7. This card signified that the bearer honoured 'all the Divine Prophets, Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, and Confucius'. It also identified its presenter as a 'Moslem under the Divine Laws of the Holy Koran of Mecca, Love, Truth, Peace, Freedom and Justice', and concluded with the affirmation 'I am a citizen of the United States'. Each card was validated by the subscription 'Noble Drew Ali, The Prophet' (Fauset, 1977:42). The members of the cult reportedly felt secure and important with their new 'Asiatic' status, symbolised by beards and red fezzes which the male members were supposed to wear at all times. They greeted each other with the word 'Islam' which means peace and changed their 'slave' or Anglo-Saxon names by adding the Arabic definite article *El* as a prefix or the (Turkish) title *Bey* as a suffix as a sign of their status and inward transformation (Berger, 1964:56). In spite of their hostility to the White race, they emphasised obedience and loyalty to the flag of the United States, so long as they were to live in America (Fauset, 1977).

The organisational structure of the movement was as follows: *The Prophet* was the top authority. Nothing whatever could be done without his knowledge and assent. The leader of each branch temple was known as *Grand Sheikh* or *Governor*. There were

elders and *stewards*. Ordinary members were known as *brothers* and *sisters*. Membership was open to all Asiatic or non-Caucasians who had renounced their former identities as ‘colored’ or ‘Negro’ (Fauset, 1977:44).

Sacred text and Rituals: The movement considered itself Islamic but its holy book, the Koran contains various religious political traditions. The Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple, for example, consists of a curious mixture of Islam’s holy book, the Qur’an, the Christian Bible, Marcus Garvey’s sayings and anecdotes of Jesus and his teachings (Bontemps and Conroy, 1945). The ritual meetings of the cult are held on Friday, Sunday, and Wednesday evenings between 8pm and 10pm. There is also Sunday school from 5pm on Sundays. Friday is the Sabbath for the Moors. Facing Mecca, they pray three times a day (sunrise, noon, sunset) and enforce a strict code of personal morality. Although they regard themselves as an Islamic sect, Jesus figures prominently in their worship, as do other aspects of Christian ritual, including hymns that have been adapted to their services (Fauset, 1977:48-51).

The growth of the movement during the post World War I years accelerated with the recruitment of better educated but less dedicated members. These new members were opportunist and ‘attempted to trick and exploit the general membership by selling herbs, relics, magical charms, potions, and literature. Some of these leaders became rich by peddling these goods to the credulous Moors’ (Mamiya and Lincoln, 1988:757). When Ali attempted to prevent further exploitation, in 1929, one of his lieutenants Sheikh Claude Greene, the merchant and philanthropist, tried to take charge of Ali’s own office. In the ensuing battle, Greene was shot and stabbed to death at the Unity Club in Chicago. Ali was arrested and jailed for his murder. He died several weeks later in mysterious circumstances after he was released on bond. His death, which has never been explained, has been variously attributed to either Greene’s supporters or to the Chicago Police Department (Essien-Udom, 1970; Fauset, 1977).

After the Prophet’s death, the cult split into numerous smaller groups. And this split led the prophet’s disciples and leading figures like Steven Gibbons El, Ira Johnson Bey,

Mealy El, and Kirman Bey to fight each other for power and leadership. They all claimed that the dead prophet's spirit had entered their bodies. Gibbons, along with six other Moorish leaders, still insisted that he was the Grand Sheikh of the MST. The movement continues to this day with a small membership and some 'temples remain active in the industrial cities of the North' (Lincoln, 1973; Haddad and Smith, 1994). Although the leaders of the NOI have emphatically denied any past connection whatsoever with N. D. Ali's MST, many Moors were among the earliest converts to the NOI (Lincoln, 1973:68; Essien-Udom, 1970). On the other hand, Bontemps and Conroy maintain that 'Fard claimed that he was the reincarnation of Noble Drew Ali' (Bontemps and Conroy, 1945:177). In addition, there are significant similarities between the MST's teachings, moral codes, organisations and worldview, and those of the NOI (Marsh, 1984:45; Podet, 1994; McCloud, 1995).

1.4. The History and Development of the Nation of Islam (NOI): 1930-1975

Social movements, whether religious or political in character, tend to arise within the context of a Great Depression or moments of social uncertainty. The NOI was not an isolated phenomenon. Like other Black Nationalist and religious movements, it arose in the 'cultic milieu' (Campell, 1972) of Black ghettos in the Northern industrial urban settings of the USA where socio-economic and political frustrations and social uncertainties were largely felt during the Great Depression which started in the late 1920s and continued through the early 1930s.

The social conditions and environment were such that the urban ghettos of the northern US were ready to erupt in a protest movement during the Great Depression. They were appropriate and generative fertile grounds for the rise of semi-religious cults and new religious movement.⁽²⁾ Between 1900 and the early 1930s nearly 2,250,000 Blacks left the rural south, most emigrating to the cities of the northern states. This growth represented an increase of over 400% in the Black population of the North; that of Detroit, for example, increased by 611% percent (Lincoln, 1973:xxiii-xxiv).

The expectations of the AAs who moved to the industrialised northern states were to improve their socio-economic conditions, and to hold the promise of equality and justice. During this period, in the North, however, many Black migrants confronted difficulties such as severe economic hardship and inequality due to their illiterate and unskilled situation and racial discrimination. Their 'socio-economic deprivations' led the AAs to concentrate on religious issues which seemed the only way for them to express their dissatisfactions (Glock and Stark, 1965). As Fauset pointed out, Black Americans' traditionally high religious participation was in part the result of the lack of other channels open to them. The various Black cults and religious movements accommodated their participation in activities such as business, politics, social reform and expression (Fauset, 1977:107-108).

In a religious context, AAs tried to show their social and religious expression through the MST. In a political context, they generally expressed their political and economic discontentment through the most popular movement, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which advocated the return of Blacks to Africa. The leader of UNIA, Marcus Garvey (1887-1940), a West Indian who formed the movement in 1914, united interest among Blacks in Africa as a Black Zion with the assertion of Black racial pride⁽³⁾ (Essien-Udom, 1970; Burkett, 1978). N. D. Ali searched for a psychic escape by changing his followers' names and the symbols of their culture, and in doing so, his Moors aspired to change their social fortunes. To Garvey, the essential solution was to remove all Black Americans to an independent African State - Liberia (Lincoln, 1973:61). But by the late 1920s, both movements were dead; N. D. Ali was dead and his followers split into several fragments, while M. Garvey was deported.

The NOI owes its origin both to the religious tradition represented by N. D. Ali's MST and the political tradition represented by Garvey's UNIA. It, however, embodies both religio-nationalist and political traditions in its ideology and objectives, since Elijah Muhammad acknowledged that both 'Garvey and Ali were forerunners of his movement', the NOI. He also referred to the 'two men as fine Muslims', though he adds 'both men failed to bring about the redemption of the race because they did not possess

the key and also the time was not ripe' (Essien-Udom, 1970:63). Therefore, the decline of these two movements left a void in 'Black religious and political life at precisely the time such a channel was needed most. The Great Depression, a disaster of momentous proportions, loomed on the horizon. This void was filled by the Nation of Islam' (Lee, 1988:30).

1.4.1. The Early Period: 1930-1952

1.4.1.1. Wallace D. Fard (1930-33 / 34)

The NOI emerged from the social, political and economic background of the 1930s when streams of illiterate and unskilled Black migrants moved from the rural areas of the South to the industrialised cities of the North.

The story of NOI, or what Beynon has called 'The Voodoo Cult', cannot be considered as complete in itself. 'Militant and Cultist movements among migrant Negroes in the cities of the North have formed a sort of tree. After one branch has grown, flourished, and began to decay, another shoots up to begin over again the same cycle' (Beynon, 1938:906). Therefore, all Black religio-nationalist movements, the MST, Garvey's UNIA organisation and the NOI as such display common features. Baer and Singer describe very accurately these characteristics of Black nationalist and religious movements. A Black nationalist and sect movement typically blend,

Religious belief with the ideal of achieving cultural independence and political or even territorial self-determination. Central to the ideology of this sectarian movement is the repudiation of 'Negro' identity as an oppressive creation by the White man and the substitution of a new ethnicity based on a belief in the unique spiritual importance of Black people (Baer and Singer, 1981:5).

The NOI as such a movement shared these common characteristics and appeared to exist and function in, what Essien-Udom (1970) calls, a 'socio-political milieu' of urban Black ghettos. However, the majority of these movements laid more emphasis on race consciousness, identity and nationalistic agendas rather than religious and spiritual issues (Myrdal, 1962).

In July of 1930, W. D. Fard appeared in the Black ghetto of Detroit as an amiable but faintly mysterious peddler selling silks and raincoats door-to-door to the residents of an area called 'Paradise Valley'. Although there is no certain knowledge about his identity and early life, he is said to have declared,

I am W. D. Fard and I came from the Holy city of Mecca. More about myself I will not tell you yet, for the time has not yet come, I am your brother, You have not yet seen me in my royal robes (Bontemps and Conroy, 1945:178).

Complementary myths concerning Fard's ethnic origins and identity are diverse; the information that does exist is vague and often contradictory. Some scholars like Akbar Muhammad (1984) and Haddad (1986) describe Fard as Turkish or Persian in origin. Lincoln, on the other hand, describes him as a Black Jamaican whose father was a Syrian Moslem, and another reports that he was a Palestinian with a long history of participating in racial agitation.

The mythological character held by the NOI also relates Fard to Arabic origin. According to Elijah Muhammad (the successor of Fard), he maintained 'to have been born in Mecca, the son of a wealthy member of the royal dynasty of the Hashimide Sheriff, a branch of the tribe of Koreish (the Prophet Muhammad's tribe)⁽⁴⁾ (Sahib, 1951:69). This connection gave Fard great credit in the eyes of his followers in founding links with the history of Islam. He used various names and titles; Wali Farrad, Professor Ford, Farrad Muhammad, F. Muhammad Ali (Essien-Udom, 1970).

Fard started teaching the new migrant Blacks of Detroit. His first access to the Black community was casual and informal, but this unusual strategy of selling silks door-to-door became an effective means of recruitment. Beynon describes this simple method, by quoting an interview:

He came first to our houses selling raincoats, and then afterwards silks. In this way he could get into the people's houses, for every woman was eager to see the nice things the peddlers had for sale. He told us that the silks he carried were same kind that our people used in their home country and that he had come from there. So we all asked him to tell us about our own country (Beynon, 1938:895).

After gaining access to the community, he gradually brought about conversation through informal chat on other issues, beginning, for example, with foods, and then racial and

religious issues, sometimes only half covering subjects in order to excite their curiosity. His method rapidly gained followers and he continued to teach them about the deceptive character and temporary domination of 'blue-eyed-devils' or White man, the glorious history and significance of the 'Black Nation', the Caucasian race, the religions of Islam and Christianity and, as well, the 'truth' about the beginning of creation. Like N. D. Ali, Fard maintained that AAs were in reality Muslims who had been separated from their true identity and must be brought back into the fold. He also declared that Blacks were not Americans as a nationality, but Asiatic, and their religion was not Christianity, but Islam, and their culture was higher mathematics and astronomy. And he instructed his followers that they were not Americans and therefore owed no allegiance to the American flag and called their attention to several hundred years of slavery followed by continual racial discrimination and economic deprivation in America (Lincoln, 1973:15). Fard stood out by proclaiming himself a prophet whose mission was to prepare the Black people for the *Armageddon* and to free them from White oppression in America. He taught that Whites are devils, Christianity was designed to enslave non-white peoples, and Allah is the only true God (Sahib, 1951; Essien-Udom, 1970).

Fard's early recruits were nationalistically oriented prior to their joining the NOI. They were sometimes active members and sometimes supporters of various Black Nationalist movements such as MST, UNIA, the Peace Movement of Ethiopia, Repatriation movements to Liberia and Africa, etc (Sahib, 1952). However, as Lincoln says, none of these nationalist groups had a leader with Fard's charisma or his ability to grab the 'Moorish and Garveyite passion and transform them into a new force, in which religious and political energies were fused. Fard's movement was destined to become the vanguard of Black Nationalism' (Lincoln, 1973:68).

At his meetings, Fard used various teaching materials and texts such as the writings of J. F. Rutherford, at that time the leader of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Van Loan's *Story of Mankind*, Breasted's *The Conquest of Civilisation*, the *Qur'an*, and the *Bible* in order to bring his followers to 'a knowledge of self'. In addition to these, Fard himself wrote two manuals for the movement; *The Secret Ritual of the Nation of Islam*, which is

transmitted orally to members and *Teaching for the Lost-Found Nation of Islam in a Mathematical Way*, which is written in symbolic language and given to registered Muslims only, but it requires special interpretation (Beynon, 1938:900).

Within a few years, Fard had developed a cohesive organisation that included the temple, educational, and security institutions, and some small businesses to improve the socio-economic conditions of his followers. He set up the temple which had its own style of worship and rituals; he also founded a *University of Islam*, a formal educational institute, essentially a combined elementary and secondary school for Black children, male and female in separate classes committed to teach 'higher mathematics', astronomy, and the nature of 'spook civilisation' of Western people. In particular, Fard established for older Black girls and women *Muslim Girls' Training Class* (MGTC) and *General Civilization Class* (GCC). The main aim of these classes was to teach young women the principles of home economics, how to be a proper wife and mother, and also their important role in the movement. Finally, he formed a private security force which was called the *Fruit of Islam* (FOI). It was a quasi-military organisation of male Muslims who served as guards of honour, ushers and enforcers of internal discipline within Temples and watched over the moral codes of the movement, as well as security agents for the head minister and other high-ranking official leaders of the NOI (Essien-Udom, 1970:44).

Beynon noted the impacts of the teachings of the NOI over its members. He maintained that NOI members were no longer unemployed and living in the most deteriorated areas of Negro settlement in Detroit:

The prophet taught them that they are descendants of Nobles ... To show their escape from slavery and their restoration to their original high status, they feel obliged to live in good houses and wear good clothes ... are ashamed that they have not been able to purchase better commodities or rent their houses (Beynon, 1938:905-6)

Through the NOI's teachings and programmes AAs gained 'a new status and new confidence in themselves'. The other factor that contributed to their socio-economic status was the ascetic principles of their life-styles: 'no money whatever is spent on alcohol, tobacco, drugs, pork and one meal a day'. Consequently, these organisational

establishments of the NOI played positive roles. The members of the movement gained a new conception of selfhood and improved both their social status and economic conditions. In short, Lincoln says that despite Fard's emphasis upon racial awareness and the protection of Black people from White oppression, 'the essence of his teachings had to do with cultural identity, the acceptability and respectability of Blackness, and economic self-help' (Lincoln, 1973:182-83).

However, by his final months in Detroit Fard began to appear rarely to his followers. This paved the way to create theological confusions about his status among the NOI members. As said earlier Fard had already endorsed his status as a noble person connected to the Prophet Muhammad's tribe and the history of Islam, and he was beginning to be known as Mahdi, prophet and the Son of Man, who had been expected for two thousand years. He was promoted and sanctified by some of his followers who believed that he was The Supreme Ruler, Allah and God in person (Sahib, 1951:92). Apparently these theological interpretations of Fard's status were not believed and accepted by all his followers. Fard's mysterious disappearance in June 1934, as had his appearances, escalated disagreements among the followers. These developments eventually caused splits in the early years of the NOI. This schism and the ensuing power struggle will be examined at length in Chapter III.

There were diverse assumptions about Fard's disappearance; some of his Detroit followers claimed that he had returned to the Holy City of Mecca, some believed that 'on May 4th, 1933, after his third arrest, Fard was expelled from Detroit by civic authorities' (Lomax, 1963:70). Elijah Muhammad himself maintained that Fard first moved to Chicago, and then travelled across the US. At any rate, Fard's last contact with Elijah was a letter from Mexico (Sahib, 1951:71). There are as many legends concerning his disappearance as surround his origins and where he came from remains in the realm of undocumented conjecture.

1.4.2. Elijah Muhammad Era (1934-1975)

After Fard's disappearance, NOI membership began to decline in number due to some internal doctrinal and organisational conflicts that occurred among leading officials of the movement (see Chapter III). Having perceived the danger with his faithful supporters, Elijah Muhammad had to move to Chicago. The NOI lay relatively dormant during the late 1930s and 1940s. But Sahib says that this period was not wasted; on the contrary, Elijah carried on spreading the teachings of the movement as he travelled across the US. During this period, he claimed to have read books in the Library of Congress recommended by Fard whose instructions directed his plans. He continued to preach the teachings in a secret way, even while in hiding, and sometimes used different names like Muhammad Rasool and Evans (Barboza, 1994, see Chapter III).

After the re-location of the movement's headquarters, Elijah Muhammad began to reshape the movement in his own way. He introduced new theological teachings, Fard became identified with Allah, God in person, and he was worshipped with prayer. He, who served 'Allah', naturally assumed, himself, the mantle of Prophet. Afterwards 'Muhammad is referred to both as the Prophet and more often as the Messenger of Allah' (Lincoln, 1973:18). Therefore, the Orthodox Islam's Shahadah, the declaration of testimony and faith to become a Muslim, has been replaced by the heretical stance of Black Islam: 'I believe that there is only one God (Allah) who came in the person of Master Fard, and (Elijah) Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah' (Mamiya, 1988). Elijah Muhammad used orthodox Islamic terms such as the concepts of Allah, Prophet, Messenger and even his name as a Muhammad. He presumably was influenced and benefited from the Ahmadiyah sect's teachings, particularly the prophecy (Turner, 1986, 1997).

Elijah Poole (Muhammad), the son of a Baptist preacher, in Georgia, was born on 10 October 1897 in Sandersville, Georgia. He married Clara Evans at Cordele, Georgia, on 7 March 1919 and he migrated with his wife and two children to Detroit in 1923 in

hopes of a better life (Sahib, 1951:90). With a little formal education and no particular skill, he was an unemployed father of six children when he became acquainted with Fard in 1931 (Essien-Udom, 1970; Marsh, 1984).

Elijah regularly attended the lectures of Fard. At the second lecture which played a crucial part in the development of the NOI, he personally spoke to Fard after the meeting. He narrated that event as follows:

When I got to him I shook my hands with him and told him that I recognized who he is and he held his head down close to my face and he said to me, 'Yes, Brother'. I said to him: 'You are that one we read in the Bible that he would come in the last day under the name Jesus', ... finally he replied; 'Yes, I am the one that you have been looking for in the last two thousand years' (Sahib, 1951:95)

Afterwards Elijah became one of Fard's most faithful ministers, and was soon given his Muslim name, Elijah Muhammad, by dropping the slave name Poole. Although Muhammad was the third minister Fard had chosen, he was the leader's favourite' (Sahib, 1951:96).

The period from 1935 to 1946 was a difficult time in the development of the NOI. Elijah Muhammad, his son Emmanuel and several other of his followers were arrested and found guilty for refusing to comply with the draft notices when the US entered World War II. In 1942 he was also charged with encouraging draft-resistance and for preaching sedition and was sentenced and obliged to serve time in prison from 1942 to 1946 at Milan, Michigan (Essien-Udom, 1970). At that time, his wife Clara played a crucial role in the development of the movement by conveying his messages and orders between Elijah and his ministers and captains (Essien-Udom, 1970:67-68). By the end of World War II Elijah was released from prison, returned to Chicago as the undisputed charismatic leader of the NOI, and then began to gather his followers together. His imprisonment enhanced his status to establish a firm leadership. It also gave him credit, because not only was it an important qualification for his leadership, but it was also evidence of the sincerity and divinity of his mission (Essien-Udom, 1970:68).

1.4.2.1. Black Identity and Creation

Elijah Muhammad taught the Black masses within the context of his message; their origin, nationality, history, the conception of evil, and the economic philosophy of 'Do for self' (see his 'Economic Blueprints', E. Muhammad, 1965). In his books *The Message to the Blackman in America*, *The Supreme Wisdom: Solution to the So-Called Negroes' Problem*, and *The Fall of America*, and *Our Saviour Arrived* Elijah Muhammad gave his version of the understanding of Islam and history, the NOI's doctrines depending on Fard's teaching system. Elijah Muhammad boosted and glorified the identity problems of Blacks. He said that,

The original man is, by declaration of Allah himself, none other than the Black Man. He is the first and last creator and owner of the universe and from him come all other races - brown, yellow, red, and including White ... The true knowledge of Black and White should be enough to awaken the so-called Negroes and put them on their feet and on the road of independence (E. Muhammad, 1957:58).

Contrary to orthodox Islam's conception of God, he further maintained that 'Allah is not a godhead complete in himself: All Black men represent Allah, or at least participate in him, for all Black men are divine. A strong platonic idealism permeates the Black Muslim concept of Allah: Pure Black is equivalent to Absolute Perfection' (Lincoln, 1973:75). Therefore he gave divine status to the identity and origin of the Black man.

The Blacks' history starts with the creation of the earth; on the other hand, the White Man's history is only 6000 years long. The Blacks, so-called Negroes in America, are the descendants of the Asian Black Nation and of the tribe of Shabazz that founded the Holy City of Mecca in Arabia (E. Muhammad, 1965). Like N. D. Ali, Muhammad looked for similar historical origins, roots of identity and linked with Islamic history to form a theodicy for Black Americans (Lincoln, 1973:114-15; Essien-Udom, 1970).

The central theological myth of the teaching of Elijah Muhammad is the conception of evil. The evil behaviour of Caucasians-Whites was interpreted by the myth of Yakub. According to the legend this describes a Black well-known scientist named Yakub, who rebelled against Allah by creating the White race: he was skilled in genetics and through

cross-breeding experiments he discovered a vengeful first White man, who would have absolute power over Black people. The pale-faced and blue-eyed White people were permitted by God to rule the world temporarily for 6000 years in order to test their justice. But they were incapable of giving justice to the Black people. Instead they achieved their power and position through devious means and 'tricknology' (E. Muhammad, 1965:112-13). But, according to the NOI's apocalyptic view, the White dominant sovereignty would not last a long time; before the White race could be overthrown, however, first Blacks had to come to a knowledge of self. That is, they had to become aware of their history and identity. Muhammad referred to this process as the 'Resurrection' of Black Americans (E. Muhammad, 1965:278). Therefore, there will come 'a time in the not too distant future when the forces of "God" and the forces of "Evil", which is to say Blacks against Whites, will clash in a "Battle of Armageddon", and the Blacks will emerge victorious to re-create their original hegemony under Allah, throughout the world' (Mamiya, 1988:210-11).

1.4.2.2. Moral and Religious Principles

The separate identity of members of the NOI was reinforced and specified by a strict ethical code. Members followed a number of rituals connected with prayer five times a day, at sunrise (fetr), noon (zuhr), mid afternoon (asr), sunset (magrib), and before retiring (isha), and facing towards the Holy City of Mecca. However in practice, they were not urged to observe the five daily prayers which were optional, except for the compulsory opening prayer of services of Temples (Interview, Imam Murad B. Deen, 1999). The NOI members had to observe certain dietary practices, some foods and drinks not being allowed, such as pork, corn bread, and black-eyed beans, etc., and alcohol, drugs, tobacco were forbidden and identified as unclean and unhealthy (E. Muhammad, 1967, 1972).

Sexual life and the roles of both men and women are regulated according to the religious belief system. Endogamous marriage is encouraged and divorce is frowned upon but permitted. Followers were severely punished for involvement in adultery and courtship,

and sometimes were temporarily expelled.⁽⁵⁾ The movement stressed the importance of family institutions. Lincoln writes:

Men are expected to live soberly and with dignity, to work hard, to devote themselves to their families' welfare, and to deal honestly with all men. They are expected to obey all constituted authority - even the usurped and corrupt authority of the White man, until the Black Nation returns to power. Women are enjoined not to imitate the silly and often immoral habits of the White woman, which can only wreck their marriages and their children. While equal in every way to their husbands, they are taught to obey them. Modesty, thrift, and service are recommended as their chief concern (Lincoln, 1973:86).

All these moral requirements and the ascetic life style of the Muslims played economic and political roles rather than religious. Elijah also encouraged the moderate life by eating one meal a day and not spending a lot of money on luxury goods.

1.4.2.3. Black Puritanism and Political Separatism

Elijah Muhammad realised that the socio-economic conditions of the Black masses were unbearable. In order to change the socio-economic fate of Black people he offered a series of alternatives; a new moral code for Blacks, and separation from the White race in two stages: economic and political. The economic philosophy of the NOI is explored in a formula 'Do for Self'. As I have pointed out earlier the economic programme was stressed by Fard in the early years of the movement. What Elijah Muhammad has done was to give more emphasises and encourage economic self-reliance through Black communalism. He noticed that one of the major problems of the AAs were their constant economic dependence upon the White man for their jobs and livelihood. The only solution to stop this dependence was to create an independent Black economic system. The economic ethic of the NOI has been described as a kind of 'Black Puritanism' because of the ascetic conception of Muslim life as hard work, frugality, the avoidance of debt or credit, self-improvement, and a conservative life-style (Parenti, 1964; Tyler, 1966). These principles changed and promoted the socio-economic status of Black Muslims from an underclass to the middle class and made them different from other Black people (Mamiya, 1982). The NOI members, therefore, are called the 'Black Puritans', and although their aim and vision may be transcendental, their methods and operations are worldly, creative, resourceful and financially profitable. They established,

during Muhammad's era, more than 100 temples, innumerable grocery stores, restaurants, bakeries, and other small businesses. The Nation itself had several farms, a bank, and trailer trucks for its fish and grocery business, an ultra modern printing press, and other assets (Lincoln, 1973:93-6). As a result, NOI members have gone far beyond other Black Nationalist groups in achieving 'the Self Help' goals that they set. To accomplish economic separatism and Black self-sufficiency in the economic sphere, Muhammad put forward economic principles that are called 'Economic Blueprints', *which* consist of five propositions:

- I Recognize the necessity for unity and group operation (activities).
- II Pool your resources, physically as well as financially.
- III Stop wanton criticisms of everything that is Black owned and Black-operated.
- IV Keep in mind - jealousy destroys from within.
- V Observe the operations of the White man. He is successful. Work hard in a collective manner (E. Muhammad, 1965:174).

Elijah Muhammad encouraged complete economic independence from White America. To do so, the NOI members were urged to withdraw their investments from White enterprises and pool their resources in Black businesses. His efforts, however, have not stimulated the proliferation of 'new Black business enterprises as they might have if the Black middle class had taken their philosophy of self-help seriously' (Thompson, 1974:150).

The policy of economic self-sufficiency was a first necessary step for the emergence of a separate state. The NOI demanded absolute separatism of the Black from the White races, rather than the integration that was put forward by Civil Rights groups. NOI members believed that the Blacks must free themselves physically (a separate state) and psychologically (in a different Asiatic or Muslim identity). Separation can take place in different forms; 'psychological, religious, and economic. But it cannot express itself in the ultimate guise of a national territory' (Draper, 1969:84).

In comparison with Marcus Garvey's demand for a state in Africa, Elijah Muhammad asked for a separate state, in his manifesto 'What the Muslims Want', within America, not elsewhere. 'We want our people in America, whose parents or grandparents were descendants from slaves, to be allowed to establish a separate territory of their own ...'

(E. Muhammad, 1965:161). However, in reality, as Lincoln points out, there are some 'indications' that Muhammad does not really believe in the physical separation of the races in America (Lincoln, 1973).

All these myths, doctrines, and beliefs of the NOI made sense for the Black masses. As Mamiya and Lincoln say: 'these myths and doctrines have functions as a theodicy for the Black Muslims, as an explanation for the pain and suffering inflicted upon Black people in America' (Mamiya and Lincoln, 1988:211).

1.4.3. Malcolm X's Era (1952-1964)

In 1948, when Malcolm Little was serving a ten year prison term for grand larceny in the Norfolk state prison in Massachusetts, his cellmate whispered to him, 'The White man is the Devil' (Malcolm X, 1968). All the myths and doctrines of the NOI began to make sense for him. These gave him a rational explanation of the pains and sufferings he had experienced, like his father's death at the hands of the White supremacist group, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), the destruction of his family due to poverty, his dropping out of school, and the years he worked as a hustler and pimp on the streets of Roxbury and Harlem.

Malcolm X was born on 19 May, 1925 in Omaha, Nebraska, USA, one of six children born to Rev. Earl Little, a Baptist minister and follower of the Black nationalist movement of Marcus Garvey, and his second wife, Louise. After his father's violent murder by the KKK in 1931 in Lansing, Michigan, his mother was driven to a nervous breakdown and was put in an asylum in 1937.

When Malcolm joined the movement, he dropped his surname 'Little', taking on an 'X', a standard practice in the movement. The symbol X was interpreted as having several meanings: 'it meant ex-Christian, ex-Negro, ex-slave, ex-smoker, ex-alcoholic. It also signified that the new convert to Black Islam was "undermined" no longer the predictable "Negro" created by the White man' (Mamiya, 1988:212).

Due to his commitment to the NOI, Malcolm X rose rapidly to become its National Spokesman. He proved his abilities as a diligent recruiter, an indefatigable organiser and orator. Whereas Muhammad spoke exclusively to the Black masses, he frequently appeared at colleges and university campuses, and he was a popular mass media discussant. He pumped spirit and encouragement into the missions or newly established small groups, arranged rallies and fund-raising campaigns and served as Muhammad's general trouble-shooter and spokesman. Therefore, throughout the 1950s the movement's expansion continued; its growth was rapid; and the number of members was increasing. From the beginning to the end of his involvement in the movement, he exerted a great deal of influence upon the internal and external affairs of the NOI. During his twelve years as a minister, he transformed the movement from a small sect into a large organisation (Mamiya, 1988:212, see Chapter III).

By the late 1950s, NOI officials intensified their efforts to get more converts and expand their message beyond the Black ghettos. For these strategies, Muhammad and his ministers used the Black mass media. For a few years (1956-1959), the NOI officials publicised their message and objectives in a column through the *Pittsburgh Courier* and later, in other Black newspapers such as the weekly *Los Angeles Herald-Dispatch* and *Amsterdam News* until they founded their own newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*. Through the Black press Muhammad attracted a wide spectrum of Blacks and stirred up a lively discussion between those who favoured him and those who were against (Essien-Udom, 1970:72).

In spite of the NOI's familiarity in the Black press, the existence of the movement was barely known to the mainstream American society. In July 1959, Mike Wallace made a TV documentary about the movement entitled 'The Hate That Hate Produced', and this marked the beginning of the awareness of wider society to the NOI's presence and teachings. This TV programme, together with the activities of members of the movement, attracted mainstream press interest and gave rise to articles that same year in *Time*, *The Reader's Digest*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*,

New York Times, etc (Lincoln, 1973:190). Initially the tendency of the White-controlled mass media was to ignore the movement, but when it came to be a question of racial threat, they produced many articles.

This nation-wide publicity of the NOI received a lot of criticism from various segments of society, from the establishments, civic authorities, conventional Black leaders, white Christians and orthodox Muslims. The criticisms of Black leaders and orthodox Muslims were interesting. The reaction of prominent Black organisations' leaders to the NOI was mixed; 'some have publicly denounced it' (Essien-Udom, 1970:73) including Roy Wilkins, Thurgood Marshall and Dr. Martin Luther King. They shared the same feelings as Whites and regarded the NOI as a 'Black supremacy movement'. The NAACP in particular, stated that it 'opposes and regards as dangerous any group, White or Black, political or religious, that preaches hatred among men' (*Ibid*). However some Black leaders such as Adam Clayton Powell and Hulan Jack did not react publicly; on the contrary, they supported the NOI's economic and social programmes to improve socio-economic conditions of AAs (Essien-Udom, 1970:74).

The most striking aspect was the attitude of Black or White orthodox Muslims towards the NOI. From the beginning, those in the US, especially Black mainstream Muslims, challenged the right of the Nation to its Islamic title. The NOI members were not recognised as true Muslims and the movement itself as a real Muslim community (Interview, Dr A. Shabbazz, 1995b). The racial factor is not a major issue in this rejection. Since some of the earliest Muslim converts in America were

Black followers of Soufi Abdul-Hamid, a Black American who embraced Islam during his travels in Asia, and Black orthodox Moslems remain scattered about the country in small numbers, occasionally augmented by the conversion of Black celebrities such as Imanu Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones), and Abdul Jebbar (Lew Alcindor) (Lincoln, 1973:182-83).

The rejection of the NOI members was, as Lincoln says, due to their unorthodox Islamic teachings and doctrines. These are 'Muhammad's extreme racial views, his emphatic militancy and unhistorical teachings about the Black Nation' (Lincoln, 1973:183). The most contentious issues concerned beliefs and practices, which were directly in conflict with the true Islamic faith; these notable beliefs are the 'Concept of God', the

‘Prophethood’, ‘Resurrection’ and the ‘Hereafter’ (Ansari, 1981:142-61). The critics and isolation of mainstream Muslims led the NOI officials to look for recognition and approval for its status as a legitimate Muslim group outside the USA in the Muslim World and Africa. Elsewhere, I have discussed, in detail, the relationships between the NOI and Muslims and organisations, both in the USA and the Muslim World from political, religious and economic perspectives and their consequent impacts on the movement (Tinaz, 1993).

From 1959 onwards, to spread and propagate its message and approach and look at issues concerning Blacks the NOI launched its own newspapers and magazines such as *Islamic News*, *Messenger*, *Salaam* and *Muhammad Speaks*. Except for *Muhammad Speaks* all of them were short lived. At the peak of its success, *Muhammad Speaks* became the largest of all Black newspapers in the United States and carried articles concerning the NOI’s ideologies and beliefs as well as Black social and political, and international news concerning to Africa and the Muslim World.

In the early 1960s, Muhammad’s health was deteriorating, and he settled in Phoenix, Arizona to take a rest. Members of the Nation were deeply concerned and worried about his bronchial condition. During his illness, he was unable to monitor the affairs of the NOI such as decision-making and administration. He eventually appointed Malcolm X as a *National Spokesman* and turned over to him all responsibility for the running of the movement. Elijah even let Malcolm make his own decisions about the affairs of the Nation. Malcolm described Elijah’s trust in him thus: ‘He said that my guideline should be whatever I felt was wise whatever was in general good interests of our Nation of Islam’ (Malcolm X, 1968:370). But Malcolm’s prestigious position and influence within the structure of the NOI engendered jealousy among officials and top Ministers and paved the way to an internal hostility towards to him. These developments will be analysed at length in Chapter III from sociological perspectives.

1.4.4. After Malcolm X (1964-1975)

Although there was no numerical increase in membership after Malcolm's defection, the movement has however spawned a wealthy Muslim commercial empire. In order to regain and expand its membership who had been active during its heyday, the NOI adopted two tactics: one was that prominent members such as Minister Louis Farrakhan who was replaced as the National Spokesman of the NOI, and Muhammad Ali, heavyweight boxing champion, were invited to Muslim events, rallies and public speeches. The main aim was to attract the attention of the Black masses and to fill the void of charismatic influence created by Malcolm X (Mamiya and Lincoln, 1988:769). Moreover, Elijah Muhammad received support from his son Wallace Muhammad who returned to the Nation during the Savior's Day Convention of 1965. But his return did not last long because of doctrinal differences between him and Elijah Muhammad. He said, 'I was right back out, I was excommunicated three or four times and always for the same charge. I was not accepting the God image given to Fard Muhammad' (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995a). The other tactic that the Nation used to improve its image was to change its rhetoric from the beginning of the mid-1960s to the early 1970s. It began to concentrate or place emphasis on the millennial predictions concerning the Fall of America (Lee, 1988). It did this through their publications and newspapers, particularly *Muhammad Speaks*. The newspaper began to publish articles regarding the issue of the decline and fall of the White civilisation. Its cover stories carried the following titles 'Break Up of the Old World', 'The Final Struggle', 'God's Anger Against America', etc. (Lee, 1988:60-61). The special 30 July, 1965 edition of *Muhammad Speaks* focused on the process of America's Fall. Most Black Muslims were convinced that this process had already begun:

All signs of the times point to the fact that the day of judgement is not some 'far-away' day coming in the distant future - but a day that has already dawned and that the Black man in America is caught in its terrible cross-fire (Lee, 1988:62).

When these millennial predictions of apocalypse did not come true in 1965 and 1966, the Nation adopted a moderate policy and changed its rhetoric again between 1967 and 1969. But the millennial character of articles and speeches reappeared by April 1969 and continued until 1971.⁽⁶⁾ However, when these millennial predictions did not occur, Dr

Salaam recalls that Elijah Muhammad himself began to become suspicious about them. He confided to him that there were some teachings which were not quite right, but he was still waiting for it to happen (Interview, Dr A. Salaam, 1995a).

The main aim of the warnings of the apocalyptic Fall of America was to consolidate and motivate members of the NOI in order to create a collective spirit in spite of the catastrophe's postponement. On the other hand, in addition to addressing all Blacks in America, Elijah Muhammad spoke in metaphorical terms and wanted them to become members of the NOI. In the 19 February, 1971 edition of *Muhammad Speaks*, he wrote:

I have the key to your solution and I have the key to your hell. I can, if you will let me, pull you out of hell and set you in heaven (quoted from Lee, 1988:68).

While the Black Muslims were broadcasting their warnings of the impending apocalypse and their millennial predictions about the Fall of America and the collapse of the White man's world in order to unite its members, and even frighten them if they did not do so, on the other hand, they did not neglect the socio-economic prosperity and the happiness of their members as a means of motivating and keeping them together. They began to establish farms in Georgia and Alabama to meet members' basic needs and to create an internal economy. This early economic policy has been reinforced by purchasing their own bank as a part of their plans to establish their own social and educational institutions such as a university, mosques, and hospitals (Lee, 1988:72). These socio-economic plans of the NOI were realised to some extent when it received a three million dollar loan from the government of Libya in early May 1972. This financial support was further strengthened later in 1972 when the Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Qatar's Minister of Finance visited Elijah Muhammad; both of them also gave economic support to the Nation to promote the proper cause of Islam in America (Tinaz, 1993). These visits and conditional forms of support made a significant contribution to the recognition of the NOI as a part of the international Islamic community.

It is not clear yet whether it was these official visits, financial aid from Muslim countries or the failure of Elijah Muhammad's apocalyptic prophecies of 'the Fall of

America' and the end of the White man's civilisation which led the NOI to moderate its policies and teachings. He tended to become more moderate during the last years of his life, toning down his anti-White rhetoric and he even seemed to move closer to orthodox Islam (Interview, Imam Murad D. B Muhammad, 1997). During the 1974 NOI Saviour's Day Convention, Elijah Muhammad made his last public speech and advised his followers to respect each other and even suggested that they should discuss the issue of respect for Whites. He made different hints and unusual remarks.

This I mean from my heart; everywhere we go respect and people will respect you. Don't think that you're so great now just because God promised you the Kingdom; wait until you get in (E. Muhammad, Audio Tape, February 1974 Saviour's Day speech, *Look at 'Self' before Charging Others ...*)

I say that the Black man in North America has nobody to blame but himself. If he respects himself and will do for himself, his once slavemaster will come and respect him and help him to do something for self (*Ibid.*).

He continued,

I don't believe in us, now, in this modern time, laying down on the 'White' man looking for him to give us something. He gave you something when he give you freedom. That's all you wanted, to be free to do something for self well you've got that. Don't now lay down around his doorstep asking him to help you. Go help yourself? That's right! (*Ibid.*).

He even went further and criticised the Blacks.

Look at yourself before ever you start charging others of your own fault. I don't say this to say the 'White' people did not treat us as they should. No they did not treat us as they should and if they had treated us as they should that would have been freedom, justice, and equality, and that nature didn't put in him. He gave you what nature give him, so now don't blame him for that which nature, by nature, you put in him. Blame yourself for putting it in him ... We must remember that the fault is not on the slave-master anymore; since he say you can go free and we say today he is not hindering us-it is we hindering ourselves ... So we must get up and do something for self, seeing that nobody is hindering us from doing for self. We must go and do self and stop charging the old slave-master with being our hindering cause-he is not; it is ourselves-ourselves (*Ibid.*).

In terms of Islam and Muslims, he also showed some principles.

I have visited the Muslim World. I have made pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina - and I have seen and I have heard. Those people don't believe in foolishness; so I am trying to clothe you not only with the garments of salvation but clothe you with the principles of our religion. These men [White Muslims] is not here to look at you just trying to be Muslims - hey are here wanting to know whether or not that you are a Muslim at heart. (*Ibid.*).

These remarks were taken by most of Muslim officials in Imam W. D. Mohammed's community and academics and professionals as hints that Elijah Muhammad was moving in new directions in both policies and beliefs.⁽⁷⁾ Those whom I interviewed have

referred to Elijah Muhammad's last sermon as something new and different from his old emphases. Imam Murad B. Muhammad, for example, remembers his remarks.

Yeah, he gave us some hints we've never heard that before. I mean, he's pleased and quite. And he was something, he was teaching, taqwa really. He was telling us about how we be get upright and clean (Interview, Imam Murad B. Muhammad, 1997, verbatim).

Lee maintains that the NOI tended to be close to the ideals and values of mainstream American society. She argued that the Muslims' relations with Christian denominations and with the wider Black community as well as their joint housing projects later in 1974 and early in the following year showed some signs of integration with the wider American society (see Chapter VII).

When Muhammad's health deteriorated, the problem of succession arose again. Even Elijah did not nominate anyone as his successor (Lee, 1988) but upon his death on 25 February 1975, the National Committee named Wallace Muhammad (then Imam W. D. Mohammed), his seventh child, to succeed him as Supreme Minister of the NOI (Marsh, 1984).

Under Elijah Muhammad's leadership, the NOI had achieved institutional stability and had endured crises and difficulties, but in the end it had also enjoyed prosperity. He gave the AAMs temples, schools, houses, grocery stores, restaurants and farms (Marsh, 1984:90). Most important of all, he offered to the Black masses the experience of revitalisation and by dropping their old ethos he provided a new identity and sense of dignity. In doing so, he brought a new sense of pride and an opportunity for self-improvement. What the NOI wanted through its doctrines and teachings was to get respectability and acceptance for all Black people whose existence, identity and culture had been denied for so long.

The NOI, according to Mamiya and Lincoln 'is the longest lasting and most enduring of the Black militant and separatist movements in America'. However, they add that the movement made a significant contribution to 'the development of the Black consciousness' and also 'reintroduced Islam as a fourth major alternative religious tradition in American society, alongside Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism'

(Mamiya and Lincoln, 1988:770). The NOI was not an orthodox Islamic movement, and as Lincoln indicates, it was not Elijah Muhammad's intention for his movement to be orthodox. But it was, by all reasonable judgements, proto-Islam because it paved the way for the emergence of an Islamic presence in America (Lincoln, 1983:223). Elijah Muhammad interpreted Islam to suit the peculiar needs of his followers who were suffering from socio-economic, identity and selfhood problems.

Chapter One: Notes

1) There are also some rumours about his origin and mission. According to legend, N. D. Ali is said to have visited North America where he received a 'commission from the King of Morocco to teach Islam to the Negroes in the United States (which president is not specified) in order to receive a "charter" for the propagation of Islam. The President is said to have told him that "it would be as trying to fit a horse with a pair of pants' (Essien-Udom, 1970:34).

2) At the time, most of the Negro based religious cults arose in the big cities of the United States, namely (1) Mt. Siani Holy Church of America Inc., (2) United House of Prayer for All People (Bishop Grace and Dady Grace); (3) Church of God (Black Jews); (4) Moorish Science Temple of America, and (5) Father Divine Peace Mission Movement. See Arthur Fauset (1977) *Black Gods of the Metropolis*, New York: Octagon Books.

3) For discussions about the Garvey Movement which is regarded as a kind of religious movement and also as a Black civil religion, see Randall K. Burkett's (1978) *Garveyism as Religious Movement: The Institutionalization of a Black Civil Religion*, Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

4) Essien-Udom records another legend about Fard's career: 'Fard is reputed to have been educated in England and at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles and to have been trained for a diplomatic career in the service of the Kingdom of Hehaz' (Essien-Udom, 1970:43).

5) Adultery and fornication were punishable by a one year exclusion from the NOI; consumption of liquor, cigarette smoking, gambling and scandal mongering led to 90 days exclusion and a maximum of 30 days absence from the Temple without legitimate excuse is also punishable (Interview, Imam R. Mubashir, 1995).

6) For the arguments and analysis of the NOI's millenarian teachings see, Martha L. Lee (1988), *The Nation of Islam: An American Millenarian Movement*. New York: N.Y. The Edwin Mellen Press.

7) Muslim officials and professionals such as Imams D. Karim, R. Mubashir, S. Salahuddin, Murad B. D. Muhammad, Dr A. Shabazz, Dr F. Muhammad and Dr A. Salaam etc. indicate the significance of these hints and remarks of Elijah Muhammad.

CHAPTER II

Methodology

This thesis is grounded in 11 months intensive field research conducted mainly in the Chicago area and in Detroit, and 3 years continued communications with Muslim officials and professionals. Sources of this study are 181 survey questionnaire responses, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, conversations and participant observations, sometimes just an observer and sometimes active participant in religious, social and cultural activities of two communities, Imam W. D. Mohammed's Muslim American Society (MAS) and Minister L. Farrakhan's Nation of Islam (NOI). Data collected through survey questionnaire comes from three types of respondents; 104 respondents who joined the NOI during Elijah Muhammad's era, 41 respondents who converted to a mainstream version of Islam led by Imam W. D. Mohammed and 36 respondents who joined and recruited to a peculiar form of Islam of Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI (a continuation of Elijah Muhammad's Islam). Besides survey questionnaire responses, a significant amount of data was also collected through interviews and conversations, both 'semi-structured' and 'unstructured' (Burgess, 1991), with both Muslim officials, professionals and rank-and-file Muslims included in these three patterns of group. In addition to these data, I have included my personal observations of religious, social and cultural activities of these communities which have generated comparatively invaluable accounts of these different factions of Muslims. Therefore, I utilised, as Burgess terms, 'Multiple strategies' (1982:163-67) 'in order to overcome the problem that stems from studies relying upon a single theory, single method, single set of data and single investigator' (Burgess, 1991:144). I will discuss this ethnographic method at length later.

Although the study of the phenomenon of conversion to Islam is popular, and has been rising over the last two decades, the subject has received little attention from social scientists. While there is a bulk of literature on conversion to numerous new religious movements (NRM) except for a few works (Poston, 1992; Anway, 1996; Kose, 1996), almost no interest has been shown in conversion to Islam. Even the existing handful of

studies, as will be discussed in Chapter IV, are far from sociological perspectives. There is, therefore, no appropriate study of conversion to Islam which I could benefit from. Instead I used mostly widely held conversion and recruitment studies in the sociology of religion and NRMs for exploring and analysing the AAs' religious and conversion experiences to Islam. I applied different models and theories of conversion and recruitment such as 'the process model', 'activist or seekership', 'organisational', 'social or faith network', etc. I was very selective and did not consider every single component of the models. In short, I attempted to form a 'multievent' (Richardson and Stewart, 1977) or 'multivariate' (Baer, 1978) approach to explain the AAs' conversion to Islam.

In addition to these, I draw upon a variety of other sources in historically describing aspects of the NOI as well as some earlier empirical studies (Sahib, 1951; Essien-Udom, 1970; Howard, 195; Lincoln, 1973).

2.1. Initial Access: Problems and Dilemmas

Gaining access is an essential step in field research. The methods of contact that the researcher has with an organisation, religious and social movements will affect 'the collection of data and the subsequent perspective that can be portrayed' (Burgess, 1991:45). During my field research I encountered different types of experiences and treatments, sometimes friendly and brotherly, sometimes respectful, but also distant and suspicious, depending on which group I gained access to. I categorised three groups and people that were researched and collected data.

- 1) The first group includes two types of people: those who were recruited to the NOI during Elijah Muhammad's era and joined the transition towards mainstream Islam under the leadership of Imam W. D. Mohammed and those who converted to Imam W. D. Mohammed's version of Sunni or orthodox Islam since the late 1970s.
- 2) The second group is those who joined the NOI during Elijah Muhammad's period and supported Imam W. D. Mohammad's Islamisation reforms of the movement such as beliefs and practices of religion but were dissatisfied with the changes in

organisational structures and policies. This group consists largely of academics and professionals. They are, equally, distant and have cordial relations with both Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS and Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI. They are also both critical and appreciative of the NOI. While they are critical of the NOI's mythical and un-Islamic teachings and unconventional policies they support its organisational strength and programmes to rescue Black youths from drugs, alcohol and crime.

- 3) The Third group is those who have joined Minister Farrakhan's NOI since the early 1980s and believe in almost similar teachings and support the programmes and policies of the old NOI of Elijah Muhammad.

Before going to the US to carry out field research, I made my initial contact with Imam W. D. Mohammed in May 1994 in Birmingham. He was touring the UK, visiting Muslim organisations and university campuses giving speeches organised by Muslim Students' Islamic Societies. After his speech at Birmingham University, I introduced myself to him and gave a brief outline of my research project and upcoming field research plan in the US. He and his entourage gave me contact addresses and telephone numbers. My second contact was not direct but indirectly it helped me to gain access to the first two groups above. It was a letter from Professor Mehmet Aydın who was my tutor during undergraduate at Faculty of Divinity, Dokuz Eylul University, in Turkey, who did his PhD at Edinburgh University together with Professor Akbar Muhammad of the State University of New York at Binghamton, a son of Elijah Muhammad. My tutor wrote a letter introducing me to Professor Akbar and asking him to assist me while I was there. Although I could not personally reach to Professor Akbar, that letter and connection helped me when I began doing field research, particularly with my initial access to both Imam W. D. Mohammed's community and Muslim academics and professionals. Later my two interviews with the Imam and his personal permission to conduct research in his community further eased my access. However, it did not mean that I could get anything that I wanted; still, from time to time, I had to repeat my initial contacts in order to build confidence both between me and Muslim officials, and Muslims in the Imam's MAS.

Another factor, of course, that made access easier to these two groups was being myself a practising and tolerant Muslim. This factor also helped me to establish good relations with Muslims because I participated in weekly Jum'a prayer (Friday prayer) at the Masjids, and weekend activities such as Ta'lim courses, Arabic and Quranic classes. But that type of overt research raised some ethical questions. How could I keep my objectivity after being friendly and intermingling with my subjects of research? I asked that question myself several times. I thought that way I could gain more insight and information and more responses to the survey questionnaire. Although I collected relatively important data and responses to survey questionnaire I realised that there was still deep-down suspicion of outsiders. A Muslim academic explained to me the general attitude and feeling of the AAMs.

Life in the US tends to cultivate an environment of suspicion with outsiders and strangers seeking information. This is particularly true within the African-American community when the researcher is of a different ethnicity. There is another dynamic. Under the NOI as led by the Hon. Elijah Muhammad, community members were under standing orders, not even to talk with persons outside of the NOI without permission. Even after Imam W. D. Mohammed introduced his community to the Quran, and Sunna of Prophet Muhammad the prevailing attitude of his followers was/is to seek his permission before any endeavor (Interview, Professor Aminah McCloud, 26 March, 1995, verbatim).

However, my access and initial contacts with Farrakhan's NOI is another story. A month before my departure for the US to do field research, an alleged plot to kill Minister Farrakhan surfaced. Mrs. Qubillāh Shabazz, Malcolm X's daughter, accusing Farrakhan of involvement in her father's assassination, hired a hit man to avenge his death. Later it turned out that governmental security agencies played some part. These developments made it extremely difficult for my access to the NOI. In the early weeks of my research in Chicago, I was desperate how to make contact with the NOI's officials and members. I visited their newly opened restaurant, Salaam Restaurant, in south side Chicago several times. At one of my visits, I took courage and introduced myself to one of the security men in charge of the entire building. He was respectful when I said I was a Muslim from Turkey and working for the Centre for Islamic Studies. Although I was sponsored by the centre to do research on the AAMs I had to hide the fact that I was coming from the UK and doing my degree there because of the NOI officials' historical mistrust and suspicion towards white people, and the western establishment and governments. NOI officials are strongly critical and distrustful of Europe, and the UK in particular where the government in 1986 issued an exclusion

order against Minister Farrakhan, refusing him entry because of his controversial remarks about Jewish people (see, Tinaz, 1999). For these reasons I did not reveal my full background.

While I was still desperate to contact the NOI and establish relation in order to start my fieldwork I came across a newly published book titled *African American Islam* by Aminah McCloud of De Paul University. I immediately made some enquiries to reach her. As she came from the NOI background she was able to give me some helpful hints and the names of Muslim professionals who could help me to gain access, for example, M. A. Rufai, Dr A. Shabazz, Dr F. Muhammad and Muhammad Al-Ahari. Mr. Rufahi, especially, played a significant role in my making contacts with Minister Farrakhan and the NOI's officials. He is a Nigerian immigrant freelance journalist and sometimes used to work as a teacher in the NOI school, Muhammad University of Islam, and currently works as an international news editor on the *Final Call*, the movement newspaper. With his recommendation I wrote a letter to Minister Farrakhan to introduce my research and obtain permission to conduct my field research and deliver a survey questionnaire among his followers. Through his secretary, we heard that he had said Yes, but it did not help as I had hoped, because the resident Minister of Mosque Maryam, Ishmael Muhammad, seemed very reluctant. Therefore, I could not make any progress at the early stage of field research.

I thought 'gatekeepers' (Burgess, 1991), who are those individuals in an organisation that have the power, would make my access to the movement easier. So I wrote another letter to Minister Farrakhan in order to get access to NOI members for the purposes of my research. As Burgess explains, his personal experience is that sometimes to negotiate access with the head of an organisation 'is not always good advice' (Burgess, 1991:48). He recommends discussing the issue with other individuals who have control over the different patterns of the organisation. He maintains that,

We need to think in terms of gatekeepers who can grant permission for the researcher to multiple points of entry that require a continuous process of negotiation and renegotiations throughout the research. Research access is not merely granted or withheld at one particular point in time but is ongoing with the research (Burgess, 1991:49).

It really happened to me. I had to form and try other strategies. I was still desperate to collect empirical data about Minister Farrakhan's followers. At one time, I even intended to join the NOI and do covert research. I discussed my intentions with Mr. Rufai, who is a mainstream Muslim, who is very familiar with and has had cordial relations with the NOI's officials and members for the last ten years. Although he is very sympathetic and a supporter of the NOI's moral teachings, social and economic programmes for AAs he disapproves of the movement's religious and mythical teachings. He said to me 'Are you sure, you're gonna accept and believe these teachings?' I said, 'Of course, not'. Then he continued, 'to be fully accepted as a registered member of the Nation you have to go through all tests in processing classes and convince Mosque officials in order to get approval for your membership' (Interview, M. Rufai, 18 June 1995, paraphrased). On Fathers' Day, Minister Farrakhan led the service at Mosque Maryam. I wanted to introduce myself to him. I joined the queue with those newcomers to the Mosque who believed the truth of what was taught and were willing to help and join the NOI (See Appendix II, Pledge Card). They shook hands with Minister Farrakhan and for the first time I had a chance to introduce myself to him after nearly three months and half. I took the Pledge Card like other newcomers but I did not get registered.

The following Friday I was invited with Mr Rufai to dinner at 'the Black House', the residence of the leader of the NOI in Chicago, Minister L. Farrakhan. At dinner I had more chance and time to introduce both my research and myself. The atmosphere was friendly and welcoming. After all, I thought, these initial contacts will produce constructive results. It was not to be. I continued to seek to gain access and tried a variety of ways. Through Rufai's help, I later met Shelby Muhammad, the director of the Department of Education and Research in the NOI, at Salaam Restaurant where we had dinner together. When I expressed my feelings and frustrations they promised to assist me by giving out some copies of my survey questionnaire to those who were close to them. They said,

Brother you're a nice tolerant and respectful Muslim. We believe in you. Muslims in the Nation generally do not trust and suspicious with outsiders seeking inside information because of their historical experiences. You should understand and respect their state of minds and attitudes. But we can try to help you by distributing some copies of survey questionnaire to Muslims whom we know personally (Interviews, S. Muhammad and M. Rufai, 30 June 1995, paraphrased).

A female Muslim academic, the first White member of the NOI in Elijah Muhammad's period⁽¹⁾ and who had been in the movement for a few years, explained her husband's caution and doubts about my survey questionnaire, and, as well, the current state of mind of the NOI members in particular and the African American Muslims (AAMs) in general. Her remarks indicate that there is still deep-down distrust and suspicion among the AAMs towards the establishment and outsiders.

Coming from the old days of the Nation he regards all such questionnaires and investigations of the Nation as possible governmentally initiated strategies to gain information about the Nation. This was very much part of the history of the American government's attitude towards the Nation, and we know that the COINTELPRO years were devoted by the FBI to gathering intelligence on all Black liberation groups especially the Nation. Even now, I believe you can also understand the hesitance on the part of Black Muslims here to accommodate any such inquiry when such tactics have been used against them through the years (Dr D. B. Fardan, 1 March 1996, personal correspondence).

Finally, I should note here that my being a Muslim eased my initial contacts with Minister Farrakhan's followers who are respectful and polite towards Muslims come from the Muslim World. This did not mean that it guaranteed that I would obtain data as I had hoped, as they were cautious and distant because of the annoying treatment and harsh criticisms they had received over the years from mainstream Muslims and organisations, and because of the NOI's religious beliefs, practices and mythical teachings. I have discussed these strained relations elsewhere (Tinaz, 1993). This time I faced another constraint: how could I put aside my conventional religious understanding and my own practices of Islam as far as the NOI is concerned. Although I appreciate the NOI's moral teachings, social and economic programmes in order to make constructive changes in the lives of AAs; to rescue them from drugs, alcohol and crime; and then to reform them by making them responsible, productive and morally accountable people, I do not agree with its religious and mythical beliefs and unconventional policies. It took me a while to leave aside my own beliefs and views and adopt an objective perspective and stance as a sociologist of religion.

2.2. Field Research Methods

One of the essential methods that has been used by anthropologists and sociologists to conduct field research is participant observation (Burgess, 1982). This method entails

the researcher participating in the object of his research in order to collect data, and thereby the researcher gains access to the meanings which participants assign to social situations. Through this method, the researcher learns first hand about a situation by using participant observation. Becker describes the role of the researcher in using this ethnographic method:

The participant observer gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organisation he studies. He watches the people he is studying to see what situations they ordinarily meet and how they behave in them. He enters into conversation with some or all of the participants in these situations and discovers their interpretation of the events he has observed (Becker, 1958:652).

In fact, participant observation compensates for some of the shortcomings of a range of empirical approaches to study the social world such as empirical methods, statistical measures and survey research, as these approaches are limited in some respects in their ability to collect comprehensive data. Burgess indicates the place and role of this method in field research.

Participant observation facilitates the collection of data on social interaction; on situations as they occur rather than on artificial situations (as in experimental research) or constructs of artificial situations that are provided by the researcher (as in survey research). The value of being a participant observer lies in the opportunity that is available to collect rich detailed data based on observations in natural settings (Burgess, 1991:79).

Moreover, the researcher has an important advantage in obtaining verbal accounts of social settings in the informants' own language and point of view which gain 'access to the concepts that are used in everyday life. The researcher can, therefore, construct an account of a social situation on the basis of the various accounts that are obtained from informants' (Burgess, 1991:79). The role of researcher in participant observation, however, takes different forms. Different typologies of participant observers were developed according to their role during the course of research.⁽²⁾ The basic typology involved is that devised by Gold (1958 cited in Burgess, 1982, 1991) who states that there are four field roles for researchers: 'the complete participant', 'the participant-as-observer', 'observer-as-participant', and 'the complete observer.'⁽³⁾ As pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, in my field research I mainly took the role of 'participant-as-observer' in order to gain access to a wider group of informants in both the Imam's and the Minister's communities. However, it should be clarified here that my role as a 'participant observer' was, to some extent, limited. I was able to make close contact with, and to observe, Muslims when I actively participated in the two communities'

religious, social and cultural gatherings. It was not, of course, observation in the literal sense of observing and monitoring all aspects of my subjects' daily life and activities as recommended and understood in the field of social or cultural anthropology. As stated earlier, I managed to establish friendly and respectful relations with Muslims at Masjids affiliated with the Imam's Ministry as well as Muslim academics and professionals in the Chicago area. I established professional and cordial relations with academics and professional Muslims in order to get more insight into, and information about, the history of the NOI and the current situation of AAMs. They included Professor Aminah B. McCloud, Dr Farid Muhammad, Dr Alauddin Shabazz, Dr Abdul Salaam, M. Rufai, Gerald E. Bilal, Aisha Mustapha, editor of *the Muslim Journal*, and Shelby Muhammad, Director of Education and research of the NOI. They provided first hand insight and information on AAMs (see Appendix IV).

As indicated earlier, in my initial access during the course of my field research I openly participated in prayer services and the educational and social activities of Masjids affiliated with Imam W. D. Mohammed's Ministry. The reason for adopting such a role was to get close to the activities and experiences of Muslims at Masjids. 'Getting close', according to Emerson *et al.*, provides 'physical and social proximity to the daily rounds of people's lives and activities; the field researcher must be able to take positions in the midst of the key sites and scenes of other's lives in order to observe and understand them' (1995:1-2). The close and friendly relations I made with the officials of the Masjids helped me to see from the inside what kind of recruitment tactics the Masjids use and what type of programmes the Masjids offer for newly converted people and Muslims in general in the community (see Chapter VIII).

During the research, I was involved in activities such as giving a Friday sermon (khutbah) and leading Friday prayers in two Masjids, Masjid Ar-Rahman and the Harvey Islamic Center at the requests of the Imams. I thought that in this way I could gain the confidence of Muslims and collect data for my research. Consequently, my role as 'participant-as-observer' helped me to gather significant data such as responses to survey questionnaires (93 responses out of 104 old NOI members who were recruited to the movement under Elijah Muhammad's leadership and welcomed the transition) and

41 respondents who converted to Islam during Imam W. D. Mohammed's leadership. On the other hand, I tried to avoid those situations which would run the risk of leading me to go 'native' and lose an objective perspective.

However, my role as 'participant-as-observer' in Minister Farrakhan's NOI did not enable me to gain access and information except through joining Sunday services, Friday prayers, some social activities and visiting NOI institutions such as restaurants and bookstores. As pointed out earlier, through the help of some Muslim professionals I established friendly but distant relations with some Muslims such as Shelby Muhammad and Richard Muhammad and with a few anonymous Muslims in the NOI. They provided limited insight and information (see Chapter VIII). The reasons for this limited degree of participant observation were pointed out earlier. I continued as 'participant-as-observer' to attend Mosque services on Sundays and a few Friday prayers, and to visit the NOI's establishments. I recorded my observations once I had left the field, drawing upon the 'mental map' gained during participant observation. In some cases, I noted important points, using key words in order to remember the details of the scene such as the age, gender, conduct and emotions of Muslims during services. I also noted which topics were discussed and which sources were referred to (see Chapter VIII).

When I was really frustrated in the early months of my field research for not being able to gather enough data, I even thought of joining the NOI in order to do covert research to gain inside information. Later I gave up this idea for two reasons. First were the ethical issues involved in undertaking research, such as using data without 'informant consent', betraying the trust and confidentiality established between informants and researcher, and invading the privacy of informants (Burgess, 1991:197-207). Second was the race and ethnic issue of participant observation (Burgess, 1991:91). Through the experience of my colleague, Muhammad Al-Ahari, a white Muslim immigrant of Albanian origin,⁽⁴⁾ I noticed that membership of the NOI is exclusively for AAs, although there are a very few White and a significant number of Hispanic members in the NOI⁽⁵⁾. Also the movement's teachings and programmes are mostly designed for AAs, and without genuinely believing in and committing to them I felt that I would not collect adequate information.

2.3. Conducting Interviews, Taking Notes and Survey Questionnaire

In this study, I used mostly semi-structured and unstructured or informal interviews, and ‘interviews as conversations with a purpose’ (Burgess, 1991:102) as a method of exploring issues in order to gather detailed data from the informants. The structured interview has limits because it is formulated in advance and assumes that ‘the interviewer can manipulate the situation and has control over a set list of questions’ (Burgess, 1991:101). That is why I chose to undertake semi-structured and unstructured interviews as they give more flexibility to the researcher and the informants. I devised several interview guides for each interview. When interviewing leaders of groups, academics, professionals, officials of the Masjids and the NOI, and ordinary Muslims, I had a set of questions for each situation that were sometimes expanded in the course of an interview or were modified and rephrased along the lines of a conversation. 16 out of 23 interviews were conducted through semi-structured and unstructured interviews, 2 through personal correspondence and 5 were conducted as conversations. I was allowed to record most of the semi-structured and unstructured interviews with leaders and officials of the groups and academics and professionals (see Chapters V, VI, VII and VIII).

In addition to these, 14 interviews were also carried out as informal conversations (see Appendix IV). All conversations were aimed at obtaining sometimes personal and sometimes collective religious and recruitment experiences. In some cases, I took notes on important remarks, using some key words in order to remember the details of conversations and later they were paraphrased in my own words. Having been introduced to each other, after a while I led the conversations round to their personal experiences and sometimes to collective and organisational issues. These informal conversations provided significant insight and information to help me understand both individuals and organisations. They were, as Burgess argues, ‘a crucial element of field research’ (1982:107) to gain data through social research and techniques. However, these interviewees did not feel comfortable about having their names mentioned and asked me not to identify them, although I could use some basic and personal details

such as jobs, age, gender, etc. I observed and respected their anonymity by allocating them numbers (see Appendix IV).

After field research, I continued to follow and update new developments on Muslims in general and AAMs in particular through the already friendly and professional relations established with Muslim academics and officials, by corresponding through post or e-mail, and telephone conversations.

Apart from the participant observation and interviews, the present research is primarily based on the results of a survey questionnaire designed to gather maximum data about the AAMs associated with the NOI. Before going to the USA for field research, I initially prepared only a single draft of the questionnaire, making some changes and modifications in its content after consultation with my supervisor, Professor James A. Beckford. However, when I arrived in the USA and began my research I realised that the early version of my questionnaire did not apply to three segments of AAMs. I had, therefore, to redesign the questionnaire in three forms in order to address these three different experiences of Muslims. Nonetheless, the contents of the three questionnaires were similar to each other with only slight variations such as name of organisation, leaders, etc. (see Appendix V).

The questionnaires consisted of two parts; the first section concerned biographical data: age, gender, marital status, education, occupation, religion, etc. The second section was designed to obtain information on pre-recruitment experiences, religious and social dissatisfactions, seeking, recruitment channels and motives for conversion of the respondents. The two parts of the questionnaire contained 69 questions. However, in this study, only the questions relating to demographic variables, recruitment and conversion were used. As Table 2.1 shows, 330 questionnaires were distributed: 160 questionnaires to the old NOI members who joined the movement during Elijah Muhammad's era and are still affiliated with Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS; 25 to the old NOI members who were disaffiliated from the Imam's MAS and are independent academics and professionals; 75 to those who converted to Islam during the Imam's leadership and 70 to the members of Farrakhan's NOI. 197 questionnaires were

Table 2.1 The distribution of questionnaires to AAMs

	No of questionnaires distributed	No of questionnaire received	No of questionnaires discarded
a) The old NOI members and still affiliated with Imam W. D. Mohammed's community	160	93	9
b) The old NOI members, mostly academics and professionals, who disaffiliated from both communities	25	11	1
c) The AAMs converted to Islam under the leadership of Imam W. D. Mohammed	75	41	2
d) The AAMs converted to Islam and joined to Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI	70	36	4
Total	330	181	16

completed and returned; 93 from the old NOI recruits, 11 from professionals and academics; 41 from three Masjids associated with the Imam's MAS and 36 from Farrakhan's NOI in the Chicago area. 16 of the forms collected were not included in the statistical analysis because some questions essential for the study were unanswered and some pages were missing. Therefore, in statistical and quantitative analysis of the research I included 181 questionnaires of which 98 were filled in by male respondents and 83 by female respondents.

I should note here that I personally distributed the questionnaires to the old NOI members and those who converted to Islam under Imam W. D. Mohammed in three locations in the Chicago area: Masjid Ar-Rahman, Masjid Al-Muminun and the Harvey Islamic Center. Imams and officials of these Masjids helped me a lot by introducing me to Muslims and asking them to fill in the survey questionnaires. In addition, Brother Gerald E. Bilal personally assisted me in distributing the questionnaires to those who were newly converted AAMs in the Imam's MAS. As indicated earlier, it was difficult and almost impossible for me, personally, to distribute the survey questionnaires to the

members of Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI. They were distributed to members through the personal efforts of M. Rufai and Shelby Muhammad. Finally, Dr A. Shabazz also helped me to identify and reach some Muslim academics and professionals. He personally contacted them with a covering letter introducing me to them. He asked them to fill out a questionnaire and either return it to him or to me. These Muslim academics' and professionals' comments made an invaluable contribution to my research.

During the course of my research I encountered several serious problems which had enormous psychological and material impacts on me causing me much frustration, and at times depression, which discouraged me from continuing my research. Two problems are worth indicating here. One derived from the experiences I confronted during the field research. As far as the Imam's MAS is concerned I received very sceptical and distant treatment in the early months of my field research. Later, however, I gradually gained their trust and confidence and eventually we established mutual and respectful relations although it took time. On the other hand, as I pointed out earlier, Muslims in the NOI of Farrakhan were over-suspicious towards outsiders who come from race and ethnic backgrounds other than black. While I was trying to contact some individuals and officials of the NOI or Mosque Maryam following initial contacts with them I was promised a meeting at certain places and times, but the promised contacts never turned up although I waited more than three or four hours. And sometimes when I wanted to make appointments with them and phoned their secretaries, they took my phone number but never returned my inquiries. I even heard occasional rumours that I was a covert agent trying to gather and provide information to the intelligence services following the alleged plot to kill the NOI leader, Minister L. Farrakhan. At one point, I was so frustrated that my hopes were almost dashed, and I regretted choosing to undertake research in this area.

The other major problem I faced during and right after my field research was personal. My sponsoring body changed its administrators, and they failed to reimburse my field research expenses and then shortly after stopped my scholarship. This led to severe financial difficulties and for some time I had to take paid employment. After many difficulties I was able to resume my research.

To return to this study, besides collecting ethnographic data, I gathered already published materials. These were obtained through several libraries. In the initial stage of my study, I used the library of University of Warwick frequently for sociological literature. The library's Inter-Library Loan Services provided materials that I could not obtain in the UK. Since the subject and perspective of my research were directly related to the sociology of religion and New Religious Movements (NRMs), my supervisor, Professor James A. Beckford, generously let me use his personal library. I also visited frequently the libraries of the London School of Economics for materials on the sociology of religion, NRMs and social movements, and the School of Oriental and African Studies for references on Islam and Muslims. In the USA, during field research, I benefited from the libraries of the University of Chicago, Northwestern University and De Paul University in Chicago, and Chicago Harold Washington Public Library. I also used manuscripts held at University Microfilm International, Ann Arbor, MI through personal purchase. The special reports and issues of magazines and newspapers provided up to date information, for example, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Newsweek*, *Time* and *U.S. News & World Reports*, etc. Finally, Muhammad Al-Ahari supplied literature on Islam and Muslims in general and African American Muslims in particular and continuously kept me informed about new developments, publications and reports. Similarly David Johnson, who was former President, the Schomburg Corporation, the Community Support Organisation for the Shomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, also provided on two occasions some references held in the centre about African Americans.

The next chapter deals with the most discussed, talked about and controversial but the least analytically and sociologically studied issue about the history of NOI-- schism. The subject has mostly received emotional and subjective treatments in the mass media and not sociological and organizational analysis from social scientists. Therefore, Chapter III analyses socio-economic, organisational and other factors involved in schism and the splits that have occurred in the history of the movement during the Hon. Elijah Muhammad's leadership.

Chapter Two: Notes

1) Although she had been around the NOI since the late 1960s because of her husband she was not allowed to become a registered member/ Muslim of the movement. During the Elijah Muhammad period the membership was exclusively for the Aas. Whites and other races and ethnicities were not allowed to become registered members but they could be supporters. She officially joined the NOI when Imam W. D. Mohammed (then Wallace D. Muhammad) relaxed the strict rules of the movement and opened the membership to other races (Reynolds, 1976; Delaney, 1975; Hunter, 1975).

2) See Burgess (1982) pp. 45-49, (1991) pp. 80-82.

3) The basic explanation of these roles is as follows: 'the complete participant' conceals the observer dimension of the role with the result that covert observation is involved; 'the participant-as-observer' does not require a complete concealment of observation but involves situations where the researcher participates as well as observes by openly establishing contacts and relations with informants under study; 'the observer-as-participant' involves just brief, formal and open observations; and 'the complete observer' involves a very distant interaction between the researcher and informants (Burgess, 1991:80-82).

4) He decided to join the NOI in 1989 and submitted his Pledge Card (see Appendix II). Since then he has heard nothing from the Mosque Maryam official responsible for processing classes necessary to attend in order to become a fully registered member of the NOI (Interview, Muhammad Al-Ahari, 15 June 1995).

5) In the history of the movement, the first Mosque of the NOI for Spanish speaking members opened in 1998 in New York City (Interview, M. Rufai, 22 April, 2000; BBC Everyman, 'Minister Louis Farrakhan and his Nation of Islam', 2 July, 1998).

CHAPTER III

Schisms in the Nation of Islam

3.1. Theoretical Perspectives

There are two widely held sociological approaches to the analysis of schism: the motivational and structural conditions (Wallis, 1979). The motivational approach hinges on accounts of motives, interests, intentions and the ambitions of those who are members or social actors of social movements (Greenslade, 1953; Niebuhr, 1957; Zald and Ash, 1966; Wilson, 1971). Wilson, for example, tries to formulate a general framework for schism by using Smelser's 'value added' model of collective behaviour. Borrowing some conceptual tools from Parsons, Wilson contends that the determinants of schism are structural conduciveness, structural strain, mobilising agent, precipitating factor and social control (1971:4). He specifically maintains that 'norm-value strain is at the core of all cases of schism' (1971:5). Then he concludes by defining a schismatic group as 'a movement which has its origins in a dispute over norms and allegations that the main group has departed from those implicated in the values of the original movement' (p. 5).

On the other hand, the structural approach focuses on the infrastructure, hierarchy, authority, charisma, etc. of organisational patterns of social and religious movements (Wilson, 1961; Williems, 1967). Wilson and Williems' studies provide useful insights into the role of structural conditions in schism. Wilson's study of three religious sects, Elim Church, Christian Science and Christadelphians, shows that structural conditions played a significant part in the schism of these sects. He suggests that among established sects, 'schism comes only from the divisions among the influential elite within each movement, no other person is sufficiently influential to cause division ...' (1961:339). In Elim, Wilson points out that the schism derived from the organisational patterns of the movement, such as the hierarchy and infrastructure at the centre but also from those at the periphery of the organisation. In Christian Science, he indicates that schism 'has

almost invariably been among the teachers of the movement, has almost always been centred on the struggle for power' (1961:340). Similarly, he notices that among the Christadelphians 'the important divisions have all been led by men who were counted among the movement's elite, the few prominent' brethren The absence of hierarchisation and of any institutionalisation of charisma has probably assisted the process by stimulating a struggle for leadership possible only in the absence of defined roles and well defined spheres of competence' (1961:340-41). Wilson concludes by suggesting a general rule of schism: 'it appears also to be generally true that schism is much more likely among the first generation of a sect, than among later generations' (1961:341-42). In addition to these two approaches, Wallis proposes a new approach to schism after reviewing and criticising some points in the above perspectives. He suggests an approach resting on 'the differential propensity of different movements and the same movements at different times to undergo fission' (Wallis, 1979:190). He extends his perspective using Nyomarkay's theory of factionalism which gives a possibility of shift in adjustment from motivations or social correlates to the structural conditions. Wallis maintains that 'such a theory should predict the circumstances more likely to facilitate schism, and should account for the generally known prevailing patterns of schism in social and religious movements' (Wallis, 1979:191).

In this chapter, the splits and infightings, which occurred during the Elijah Muhammad era, will be examined. First, I will analyse the schisms that emerged in the early years of the Nation of Islam (NOI). Second, I will examine the splits which occurred when the movement became very popular in the 1960s and 1970s. Third, I will focus on Malcolm X's defection and the schism which resulted because of its significant impact on the movement's organisational developments. Besides the above schisms and splits, important divisions and developments occurred in the NOI after the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975. These schisms and developments will be briefly analysed in Chapter VII.

3.2. The Schism in the Early Years of the NOI

The NOI, in over forty years of its history, from the early 1930s until the mid-1970s, has experienced a variety of schisms, splits and defections. The history of the NOI contains a number of insights into the structural and motivational conditions for the occurrence of splits, conflicts and disagreements. As Wallis said, 'schism tends to be characteristic of the early stages of a movement's life cycle' (Wallis, 1979:187). This is exactly what happened to the NOI in 1933 when the movement was only three years old. The presence or absence of an authority or hierarchical structure strongly influences the course of any social or religious movement (Zald and McCarthy, 1987). There was apparently no strong well-established authority that could resist disruption and conflict in the early years of the NOI.

After his conversion to the NOI, Elijah Muhammad dedicated himself entirely to W. D. Fard, who was the founder and the prophet of the movement. Although opposed by moderates in the hierarchy, he got fast promotion among the ministers and became Fard's most trusted lieutenant. Later, Fard appointed Elijah Muhammad to the post of Chief Minister of Islam, which was a prestigious position second to the leader in the NOI. After the departure, deportation or 'mysterious disappearance' of W. D. Fard,⁽¹⁾ which occurred some time in May 1933 (Sahib, 1951) or in June 1934 (Lincoln, 1973) in Detroit, the movement experienced conflicts and schisms among ministers and influential members due to both motivational and structural factors. Fard's absence, like the death of a charismatic leader of a social or religious group, created instability (Wallis, 1979) and a vacuum of authority in the NOI.

Elijah Muhammad began to introduce different teachings into the NOI, the most profound being the status of Fard. Elijah taught the members that Fard was God/Allah in person and Fard's mysterious disappearance boosted this belief. Wilson (1961) found that disagreement over the divine nature of Jesus among Christadelphians led to a variety of schisms. Similarly, in the NOI, the same contention about the nature of Fard, according to Dr. A. Shabazz, an academic and former member of the NOI, caused splits

and schisms among ministers and early members of the NOI and consequently they banished Elijah Muhammad from Detroit (Interview, A. Shabazz, 1995a).

However, it was not only the religious beliefs that were the causes of the split and conflict, but also the controversial policies of Fard pertaining to the citizenship of members and the origins of the American Constitution and flag. The very nature of Fard's political teachings caused schism and factionalism. Fard taught his followers that they were the Asian Black Nation, not American, and accordingly they owed no allegiance to the American flag and the Constitution (Lincoln, 1973; Marsh, 1984). In Detroit, the first opposition came from Abdul Muhammad, who was the first minister under Fard, until he left the NOI and organised a competing temple (Sahib, 1951; Ansari, 1985). Abdul Muhammad, in contrast, began to teach complete loyalty to the American Constitution and the flag. This splinter group was only a short-lived faction (Lincoln, 1973).

Following this schism, several defections occurred among ministers such as Azzim Shah and Theodore Rozier who formed their own organisations between 1936 and 1938 (Sahib, 1951). Although there were no differences in their teachings and policies, the splits occurred as a result of personality conflicts, which were often due to struggles for the leadership (Sahib, 1951). These cases of schism and conflict in the early years of the NOI have significant similarities with Wilson's findings on the causes for schism in Christian Science and Christadelphianism. He argues that 'Schism in Christian Science has ... always been centred on the struggle for power' and, in the case of Christadelphianism, 'clashes of personality, perhaps specifically concerned with ambition to lead' (Wilson, 1961:340-41).

Elijah Muhammad realised that he was not able to continue preaching in Detroit. Hence, he moved to Chicago after appointing a minister in Detroit. Even in Chicago the personality conflicts did not leave him and his circle alone. At that time, a schism developed between Elijah and his own brother Kalatt Muhammad, the Supreme Captain of the FOI (the paramilitary organisation of the NOI), over teachings and methodology.

That conflict, particularly, destabilised the infrastructure of the movement. Elijah described the turmoil in the early years of the movement after the disappearance of Fard as follows:

In the fall of 1934 most of the followers turned out to be hypocrites and they began to teach against the movement, and to join the enemies of the movement. The situation got so bad that in 1935 it was impossible to go among them because it seemed to me that over 70 percent of them were hypocrites ... So Allah [W. D. Fard] warned me to leave. Hence I left to Milwaukee, where Allah warned me to leave again and showed me in a vision nine people; among them was my brother. Therefore, I left to Madison, where they followed me; and Allah warned me again to leave Madison (Sahib, 1951:80).

As a consequence of the personality clashes, the movement experienced a rapid downfall. After threats to his life, Elijah had to change his address from 'city to city and from place to place' for seven years, the 'hiding period' (1935-1942). During this period, Sahib says that Elijah spent most of his time in Washington, D.C. preaching the NOI teachings under several names, for example as Mohammed Rassol (Sahib, 1951), and Mr. Evans (Barboza, 1994:80).

3.3. Schism in the 1960s and 1970s

On the one hand, the NOI was enjoying its heyday organisationally with a growing membership, while on the other hand local splits and conflicts continued to be part of its history and development. In the early 1960s, two noteworthy schisms or splits arose, one was the Five Percenters and the other was the Hanafi Sect.

3.3.1. The Five Percenters

The Nation of the Five Percent (NOIFP), a splinter group that came out of the NOI around 1964, was founded by a former Korean War veteran, Clarence Smith Jowers (Clarence 13X). In 1960, he joined the NOI and rose through the FOI unit at Temple No 7 in Harlem, NY. He remained in the movement until his expulsion by Malcolm X under orders from the Chicago headquarters in 1963 (Matthews, 1969; Cuba, 1992).

The cause of his expulsion rested on two cases; one was that Clarence 13X violated the NOI's moral codes. He admitted a love for gambling and drinking (Gotterher, 1975; Cuba, 1992). Under NOI rules, a member who was involved or engaged in any kind of immoral act including gambling or drinking was subject to disciplinary action. In religious movements, the attitude taken towards the movement's ideology is an important structural determinant of schism (Wilson, 1971). Clarence 13X took a negative attitude and behaviour towards the NOI's principles. Malcolm X described Clarence as being a rebel: 'he refuses to abide by the rules and we gave him many chances. I think he would fare better out of Mosque 7' (Matthews, 1969) where Malcolm was a resident minister.

The other notable factor in this schism was the disagreement over teachings. Clarence 13X began to encounter troubles in the NOI when he started to question the belief that W. D. Fard was Allah. He concluded that Fard could not be God because NOI beliefs affirmed that the Original Man or Black Man was God whereas Fard's features did not look Black, but were pale-skinned like a white man. He began to reinterpret Fard's 'Lost-Found Muslim Lessons', and reached the question, Why is only Fard God and Divine? Why not all Black men collectively? He believed in the divinity of Black men (Nuruddin, 1994; Mamiya, 1988). When Clarence began to teach his own interpretations in Temple No 7, the NOI authorities rebuked him and ordered him to stop teaching. Consequently, he found tension growing against him in the temple and he left the NOI, along with his companion, Justice (Nuruddin, 1994).

Clarence, with Justice, began to disseminate his interpretations of the lessons of the NOI to the masses of Black youth on the streets. He formulated a system called 'the Supreme Alphabet' and 'the Supreme Mathematics'. By this method, he recruited hundreds of youth to join the movement that was 'first known as Allah's Nation of the Five Percent' (Nuruddin, 1994:115). The Black youth that he taught on the streets gave him the title 'Father Allah' (McCloud, 1995).

The epithet, the NOIFP, derives from their belief that eighty-five percent of humanity believes in a 'mystery God' and worships 'that which did not exist'. They are in a state of ignorance and lack true self-knowledge. Ten percent were 'blood-suckers' of the poor and devils who misled the majority. They kept the masses asleep with myths and lies. The remaining five percent were those who taught righteousness, freedom, justice and equality to all the human family. Their mission was to lead the eighty-five percent to freedom, justice and equality (Gotterher, 1975; Cuba, 1992; Nuruddin, 1994; McCloud, 1995).

Father Allah designed a new educational programme with the assistance of the civil authorities in New York City to train high-school dropouts for further schooling, and prevent crime and violence in the streets. The Street Academy was set up with the co-operation of both Mayor Lindsay's administration and the Urban League (Arnold, 1969; Nuruddin, 1994). With this school system, Clarence expanded his recruiting grounds for Black youths. Later the school was called, The Allah School in Mecca.

On 13 June 1969, Clarence was assassinated by three Blacks. His assailants remain unknown. According to the daily newspapers, the NOI was behind the murder because of their disagreement with the NOIFP over its teachings and strategies. However, the New York Police Department also played a provocative role in creating a fighting atmosphere between these two groups (Cuba, 1992). Minister L. Farrakhan, at that time a resident Minister of Muhammad's Temple No 7, denied the newspaper account, stating that 'We are extremely outraged by the vicious, wicked, deliberate sowing of divisive, slanderous seeds by *The Daily News*, which appears to be desiring to cause Black people to fight and kill each other' (Farrell, 1969).

After the death of their leader, Father Allah, the NOIFP experienced a period of disunity, but from 1971 onwards, the group reorganised with a new formula of collective leadership. Subsequently, since the 1980s and early 1990s, the NOIFP has become popular and grown in numbers among inner city Black youths. The group's doctrine of Black godhood, Black identity, and the symbolism of its Universal Flag have

become fashionable in the field of rap music. The group's nationalistic teachings have attracted a significant number of Black youths. More importantly, the NOIFP's teachings and mottoes became the source of inspiration for composing songs for Black rap musicians such as Rakim, Big Daddy Kane, Lakim Shabazz etc. (Cuba, 1992; Nuruddin, 1994).

3.3.2. The Hanafi Sect (Madhab)

The Hanafi Sect is not regarded as a splinter group but, rather, it is generally considered as a counter movement to the NOI. The leader of the sect, Hamaas Abdul Khaalis - formerly known as Ernest Timothy McGhee - became acquainted with the NOI in 1946, and gradually converted to the movement in 1950. Khaalis was rapidly promoted in the infrastructure of the Nation and took charge of the movement's elementary and secondary school, known as The University of Islam, in Chicago. In 1956 Khaalis was appointed National Secretary of the NOI - the second in command (Delaney, 1973a; Farrakhan, 1974; *Christianity Today*, April, 1977).

While a member of the NOI, Khaalis was one of Malcolm X's closest friends and claimed that he influenced Malcolm's decision to make the pilgrimage and his defection from the NOI (*Christian Century*, 1977). In 1958, by taking a small faction with him, he voluntarily defected from the NOI, reportedly over disagreements concerning Elijah Muhammad's extravagant spending and personal lack of discipline (*Christianity Today*, April 1977). It was also said that there were extreme differences between Elijah and Khaalis on the beliefs and principles of the NOI regarding racial policies and some interpretations of Islamic teachings. He noticed that 'Black Muslims had misinterpreted the doctrines of Islam by excluding Whites and by accepting Mr. Muhammad as a 'Messenger of Allah' (Delaney, 1973a).

Differences in belief and practice are primary causes of religious schisms which, by definition, should be an ideological matter (Ammerman, 1987). In the case of Khaalis and the NOI, a schism again occurred among the influential elite and teachers of the

movement (Wilson, 1961). Another distinctive factor between the NOI and Khaalis was their political philosophy. While patriotism and loyalty to the American flag is a part of Hanafi life, the NOI, from its inception, has been opposed to these kinds of American values. In the case of Khaalis, two causes seem to be apparent, one is the cognitive development and the literacy levels of members, and the other is interaction with orthodox Islam and Muslims. When Khaalis became more knowledgeable about Islam, he began to notice 'a breakdown' of his beliefs in the NOI's doctrine (Ammerman, 1987; Rochford, 1989). Khaalis' interaction with orthodox Muslims played a role in his defection from the NOI. He said that he was directed and instructed by his orthodox Muslim teacher, Tasibur Uddein Rahman (Delaney, 1973a).

After his defection from the NOI, he was barely known between 1958 to 1967. Malcolm's assassination had a great impact on him and aroused his hatred for Elijah's NOI. In 1967, he founded the Black American Hanafi Sect in New York City, and later he moved the group headquarters to Washington D.C. where a newly converted basketball star, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, donated a large building to the group.

Until January 1973, the Hanafi Sect was barely known. It became headline news when the sect headquarters was invaded and seven members of the Khaalis family murdered. The motive behind this mass murder was Khaalis' recent contemptuous missive about Elijah Muhammad's status. He sent a copy of a letter to all the NOI Mosques across the United States, denouncing Elijah Muhammad as 'a lying deceiver', marketing a false brand of Islam based on hatred of Whites (A. Muhammad, 1977; *Newsweek*, 1973; *Christianity Today*, 1977). Although Minister Farrakhan, at that time, denied any involvement of the NOI in the murder case (Farrakhan (1974), some observers suspected that the NOI had played a role in the event (*Christianity Today*, 1977).

Khaalis made the news for a second time in March, 1977, when he and several followers took over several buildings in Washington D.C. During the negotiations for the release of hostages one person was killed. Khaalis was sentenced to a long term in prison (*Time*, 1977) from where he still continues to lead the movement.

3.3.3. Splits and Infighting in the Early 1970s

The NOI in the early 1970s experienced more splits, infighting and violence due to organisational, economic and doctrinal factors. The officials of the movement did not pay enough attention to the growing dissension among ordinary members who formed dissident factions such as The Young Muslims, The Calistran, and The New World of Islam that rebelled against central authority for a variety of reasons. These small dissident groups carried out their violent activities across the USA.

The Young Muslims have been involved in the killing of conservative members in the Midwest region in Chicago and Indiana. It was uncertain who was killing whom. They attempted, in particular, to kill, in October 1971, Raymond Sharrieff, son-in-law of Elijah Muhammad and the Supreme Captain of the FOI. The Young Muslims wanted to see some changes in organisational structure and equal distribution of wealth of the movement. They wanted to express their grievance directly to Elijah Muhammad, but all their attempts were blocked by the officials of NOI, particularly Raymond Sharrieff (Delaney, 1972; Lincoln, 1973). Wilson considers this kind of situation one of structural conduciveness to schism, saying that the 'absence of a channel for the expression of grievances' prevents the aggrieved group from expressing hostility, pushing it to 'punish some person or group considered responsible for the disturbing state of affairs' (Wilson, 1971:12). The most concrete reason for The Young Muslims' contention was 'economic' and 'financial factors' (Niebuhr, 1957). They claimed that the NOI's vast wealth was used to support the extravagant life style of Mr. Muhammad, his family and his top lieutenants in the NOI, and not going to ordinary members of the movement. The official reaction to these criticisms has been scattered in different issues of *Muhammad Speaks*. In the issue of 12 November 1971, for example,

As the holy flame of divine success grows stronger ... the unholy flame of envy grows in its intensity. But what a price the envier pays for his envy ... Envy and jealousy is one of the earliest and most common emotions that the Black people have ever known, here in America. Envy is so degrading to the person who envies; from the time of slavery, if a Black brother was able through his hard striving to purchase ... a new pair of shoes, an evil brother looked on with envy. Envy is such a disease among our Black people ... (Lincoln, 1973:215)

The other two radical insurgent groups, the New World of Islam and the Calistran, had similar grievances with the hierarchical structure and administration of the NOI. They decided to travel nationwide to claim that the organisation was swerving from its fundamental philosophy and to seek support for their cause. While the New World of Islam carried out its activities in the South and East Coast regions, the Calistran focused on the West, California. In the early 1970s, these two groups strongly objected to the NOI's modification of its hostile criticism and policies towards Whites and their establishments (see Chapter I). This modification of their policy was a result of economic relations with Muslim countries: 'the agreement reportedly called for funds from the Arab states in return for a relaxation of the Black Muslims' racial policies and the bringing of the Black Muslim philosophy closer to traditional Islam' (Delaney, 1973b; Tinaz, 1993). The deviation from the central tenets of the NOI was one excuse for these two dissident groups to split. The other reason was the mistreatment of NOI Muslims in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and other places (Lincoln, 1973) by the authorities and Whites and the movement officials did not take action to protect Muslims. They aimed both to reinstate the NOI's militant and uncompromising policies against Whites and to take revenge from White men for their mistreatment of Muslims.

The New World of Islam wanted to demonstrate that Blacks should not fear White officials and could even stand up to the police (Delaney, 1972). Like the Black Panthers, a revolutionary Black youth group, they were frustrated by the *status quo* policies of the ruling stratum of the NOI and looked for 'action' rather than 'talk' (Lincoln, 1973). In late December 1971 and early January 1972 they appeared in Baton Rouge, LA, and made contact with local disaffected Black youths in order to organise a demonstration against Whites and their establishments. They confronted the police and the riot ended with two deaths and thirty injuries (Delaney, 1972). Another branch of this group also carried out violence, this time against the NOI conservative officials in the East Coast regions, killing James Shabazz, local Minister of Temple No 25 in Newark, NJ (Delaney, 1972; Phalon, 1973)

Elijah Muhammad bitterly denounced and accused those members who had caused violence and disruption of the unity of Muslims. He called them 'self-haters' and 'murderers' in an article in the 14 January 1972 issue of *Muhammad Speaks*: 'what the Muslims are faced with today, while trying to make unity, the Muslims are faced with murderers and killers coming to them from among our Black brothers'. He described those involved in the shooting in the South and the East Coast as not being 'good Muslims'.

The Calistran, on the other hand, carried out their activities on the West Coast, in California. This splinter group took the teachings of the NOI literally concerning White hostility. The group taught that killing a certain number of 'White grafted devils' would lead them into elite status in the Nation as the Death Angels (Howard, 1979; Ahari, 1994).

According to the Calistran's philosophy, to become a member of the group, one had to kill four White children, five White women, or nine White men. In October of 1973, there were fifteen Death Angels in California. They were involved in killing 135 White men, 75 White women and 60 White children throughout the State. To kill a White was regarded as a stage of perfection. The reason given by the Calistran for the killing was to frighten Whites in order to establish a Muslim city dominated and controlled by Blacks (Howard, 1979; Ahari, 1994). This now defunct group was short-lived but was of great concern to police departments in California.

The NOI officials harshly criticised and denounced these dissident groups. Elijah Muhammad said 'some little splinter groups that sometimes want to go out for themselves and be big boys. And so that they take chances sometimes and they stub their toes and they have to go back home and bandage them up. By that time, we're back where we was' (*Newsweek*, 1972). And these dissident groups did not scare him. He said, 'I do not fear anyone trying to kill me. I am protected by Allah'.

3.4. The Defection and Schism of Malcolm X

The most controversial and dramatic event in the history of the NOI was the defection of Malcolm and his subsequent assassination. Though this historical event marks a turning point in the organisational and membership patterns of the NOI, very little research has been done to examine what kind of factors played a role in the schism between Malcolm X and the NOI of Elijah Muhammad. As Karenga claims, the dissension and eventual schism between the two has been the subject of emotional and psychological assumptions and denunciation but not of objective and political analysis (Karenga, 1982).

The role and importance of Malcolm X and the consequences of his defection and assassination in the history of the NOI has already been studied extensively and analysed from the various perspectives of the social sciences, such as the historical, the political, the religious and the journalistic (Breitman, 1967; Goldman, 1979; Karenga, 1982; Kly, 1986; Evanzz, 1992; Perry, 1992; DeCaro, 1994). Therefore, the schism caused by Malcolm X will be analysed here from a sociological perspective. In this schism, several factors played important roles. These included organisational, socio-economic and political issues, power struggles and personal conflicts, interactional and relational and governmental manipulation. Before moving on to analyse these factors, it is useful to say something about the organisational developments of the movement and Malcolm X's influence in them.

3.4.1. Organisational Developments in the Early 1960s

The NOI in the early 1960s reached its climax organisationally and in its membership. Behind the success and popularity of the NOI, Malcolm X was the focal point. Malcolm Little converted to the NOI while he was in prison. He was released from prison on parole in 1952. He was renamed Malcolm X by Elijah Muhammad and became an assistant minister at the NOI's Temple No 1 in Detroit in 1953. Over the next few years he rose rapidly in influence, overtaking senior ministers and officials of the NOI to

become 'the Big X'. Malcolm was sent to organise Temples in Boston # 11, Philadelphia # 12 and New York City's Harlem Temple No 7 (Marsh, 1982).

During his ministerial post in the NOI (1953-1964), Malcolm remained absolutely loyal and devoted to Elijah Muhammad. He echoed Muhammad's message to the Black man in America throughout the US. In separatist and nationalist perspectives, Malcolm championed the economical, political and identity philosophies of the NOI (Munir, 1993). He believed that Elijah Muhammad's religio-nationalistic teachings made Blacks proud of their ethnic identity, history and race (Karim, 1971:23-66). He said that 'no one will know who we are until we know who we are! We never will be able to go anywhere until we know where we are! The Honorable Elijah Muhammad is giving us a true identity ...' that is 'you are not a Negro', but you are members of the Asiatic nation, from the tribe of Shabazz' (Malcolm X, 1968: 356-357; see E. Muhammad, 1957:15).

Like some of the unconventional nationalist movements, the NOI completely disassociated itself from involvement in the American economic and political system. It assumed that the system had always been unequal and unjust and had not done anything to change the socio-economic fortune of the Black masses over the years. The NOI refused collaboration with the civil rights movements that initiated the integrationist policies. Malcolm criticised that approach in race relations, remarking that integration policies had not resolved the Black masses' problems and, therefore, a new approach had to be tried (Munir, 1993). The solution would be 'complete separation from the White man' (Malcolm X, 1968:348). Malcolm clarified the NOI's political objectives further:

We reject segregation even more militantly ...We want separation ... The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us that segregation is when your life and liberty are controlled, regulated, by someone else. To segregate means to control. Segregation is that which is forced upon inferiors by superiors. But separation is that which is done voluntarily, by two equals - for the good of both! (Malcolm X, 1968: 348).

The NOI Muslims totally abstained from participation in American mainstream politics and they gave more emphasis to 'economic self-improvement and to developing the social and moral status of the Black lower class' (Essien-Udom, 1970). The NOI's political objectives were complex and ambiguous; they sometimes advocated territorial

separation in the US to form an independent Black state and, if this did not seem possible, they sometimes proposed a nostalgic feeling, a 'return to our native/ own land', Africa (E. Muhammad, 1965:38). The NOI never attempted to materialise those objectives and never even clearly defined them. Rather, these separatist teachings provided a psychological departure from the mainstream American society (Essien-Udom, 1970; Munir, 1993).

Because of his illness, in 1963 Elijah Muhammad appointed Malcolm X as National Spokesman in charge of the NOI's affairs. Since Malcolm⁽²⁾ had gained his trust and confidence, Muhammad gave him more power and freedom to represent him and the NOI at national and even international levels. Further Elijah Muhammad strengthened officially and spiritually Malcolm's status in the NOI on several occasions. Two cases are worth mentioning here. First, Elijah Muhammad told Malcolm one day: 'Brother Malcolm, I want you to become well known, ... because if you are well known, it will make *me* better known'. However, the Messenger (i.e. Elijah), from the very outset admonished him to be cautious about jealousy that would probably arise among the high-ranking officials of the NOI (Malcolm X, 1968:370). Second, in 1963, at a rally in Philadelphia, Muhammad embraced Malcolm before a huge crowd and said 'this is my most faithful, hardworking minister. He will follow me until he dies'⁽³⁾ (Malcolm X, 1968:402; Perry, 1992).

Having been officially and spiritually endorsed by the leader, Malcolm, with increased prominence, status, administrative and decision making duties, began to represent the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and the NOI on television and radio and at university and college campuses (Malcolm X, 1968). Accordingly, Malcolm began 'to diversify his influence in the movement both locally and nationally'. As the NOI continued to grow, Malcolm 'was not only intricately involved with every temple' and institution associated with the movement, 'but he became virtually an extension of Elijah Muhammad himself' (DeCaro, 1994:329). Consequently, Malcolm, with his organisational and oratorical talents, began to reshape and design constructively the structure and rhetoric of the NOI according to his own militancy and revolutionary ideology.

Malcolm's political philosophy derived from the NOI's separatist teachings. He took these teachings further and gave them more militant and revolutionary tones. As Breitman points out, Malcolm 'stretched the bounds of Muhammad's doctrine to the limit, and sometimes beyond. He introduced new elements into the movement, not only of style but of ideology' (Breitman, 1967:9). After reviewing the objectives and consequences of the major revolutions⁽⁴⁾ of the twentieth century, Malcolm severely criticised the passive Black struggle, saying,

Brothers and sisters, to show you that you don't have a peaceful revolution. You don't have a turn-the-other-cheek revolution. There is no such thing as a non-violent revolution. The only kind of revolution that is non-violent is the Negro revolution. The only revolution in which the goal is loving your enemy is the Negro revolution (Breitman, 1965:9).

In the context of the NOI's separatist policy, which demanded either territory from the government to establish Blacks in their own state in the US or to send African Americans back to Africa with satisfactory reparation (Munir, 1993), Malcolm formed his revolutionary political ideology. He said,

Revolution is based on land. Land is the basis of independence. Land is the basis of freedom, justice and equality. Revolution is bloody and hostile ... knows no compromise. A revolutionary wants land so he can set up his own nation, an independent nation. When you want a nation, that's called nationalism. A revolutionary is a Black nationalist. He wants a nation (Breitman, 1965:9-10).

In the 1960s, Black nationalist and civil rights groups reached a climactic moment organising protest demonstrations and marches to improve and raise socio-economic and political rights of AAs. They approached the NOI officials many times and urged them to participate in their protests so as to form a unified force and pressure the US government to pass the Civil Rights Bill. However, the NOI ruling stratum turned down all these appeals, because Elijah Muhammad's and the NOI's official policy was not to get involved in 'White man's politics' and he was 'reluctant to allow his ministers to engage in political activity'. He thought that the White political system would be doomed to destruction and that the Blacks who declined to separate from Whites would also be destroyed with it on the Day of Judgement (Perry, 1992:210). These sorts of abstentionist policies led to harsh criticism by civil rights and other Black nationalist organisations. Although they appreciated the NOI's contributions to improve Blacks' socio-economic status, they were very critical of its political stance. They claimed that

‘they [NOI members] clean people up, don’t drink, don’t smoke ... but they don’t *do* anything. Don’t even vote’ (Goldman, 1974:93). ‘They talk tough, but they never do anything unless somebody bothers Muslims’ (Malcolm X, 1968:397). Eventually, this criticism of the movement’s policies sparked dissatisfaction and embarrassment among the younger members of NOI headed by Malcolm X. The young and revolutionary members became frustrated and pressured the community in the direction of political engagement, at least by participating in events and protests organised by other local and national Black Nationalist groups (Breitman, 1967; Perry, 1992). These two opposing attitudes implied that a condition of strain was arising, leading to a probable polarisation of ideals and policies in the NOI. As Wilson points out, ‘a condition of strain is a necessary factor in the occurrence of schism but hardly a sufficient one. To become operative, that strain must be associated with other factors’ (Wilson, 1971:9). In the case of the NOI, the main determinant strain for schism between Malcolm and the NOI was political. To be functional, that strain had to be combined with several other factors, such as organisational, economic, power struggles, etc.

3.4.2. Organisational and Political Economic Causes

Among the five causes of religious differentiation, Yinger (1970) includes ‘the variations in economic and political interests and social mobility and social change’ (Yinger, 1970). The major cause for the schism between the NOI and Malcolm X is seen by Maulana Karenga as policy and power conflicts (Karenga, 1982). His analysis and explanation seem to suggest that a more balanced treatment and objective evaluation is possible when the whole conflict, that wracked the NOI and contributed to Malcolm’s defection and in part to his death, is perceived from a political perspective. Applying Weber’s theory of the ‘Routinization of Charisma’ (Gerth and Mills, 1958) and Michels’ thesis of the ‘Iron Law of Oligarchy’ (1959), Karenga asserts that the schism was the result of the political and economic transformation and bureaucratisation of the NOI and subsequently the power or leadership struggle between Malcolm and what Karenga calls ‘the ruling stratum’ of the movement. Two possible political directions were engendered by the NOI’s political philosophy: one was the abstentionist,

conservative tendency represented by the ruling stratum and the other was the radicalism and activism represented by Malcolm (Karenga, 1982:194; Breitman, 1967; Goldman, 1979).

There is general agreement that all types of movements, social, political, or religious, and their organisational forms undergo processes of change and transformation, both organisationally and ideologically over the course of their history (Michels, 1958; Zald, and Ash, 1966; Weber, 1978). No movement comes into existence with a comprehensive ideology, a set of policies and an established organisational structure. These elements require a long process of development to become firmly established. The history of the NOI raises some theoretical issues with regard to growth of the movement, change and transformation. The NOI, having attained its highest level of development by the early 1960s, had begun to change in structure, ideology and emphasis of policy, taking on the characteristics of a sect.

The transformation of social and religious organisations has been analysed mostly through the perspective of the institutionalisation model. According to this model, when social and religious groups attain substantial levels of economic and political influence and membership, they tend to modify their organisational structures, ideologies and agendas, eventually leading to institutionalisation. Inspired by Weber and Michels' theoretical framework, Zald and Ash attempted to formalise a model.

As a MO [movement organisation] attains an economic and social base in society, as the original charismatic leadership is replaced, a bureaucratic structure emerges and a general accommodation to the society occurs. The participants in this structure have a stake in preserving the organisation, regardless of its ability to attain goals. Analytically there are three types of changes involved in this process; empirically they are often fused; goal transformation, a shift to organisational maintenance, and oligarchization (Zald and Ash, 1966:327).

These three types of changes began to appear in the NOI in the early 1960s. First, the NOI's ideal and transcendental goals were transformed from militant and revolutionary towards conservatism and material interests. Second, after attaining organisational and economic institutionalisation, the NOI tended to modify its beliefs and policies in close alignment with dominant societal norms (Parenti; 1964). Third, the NOI formed a

centralised official hierarchy consisting of, in Zald and Ash's terms, a 'minority of the organisation's members', that is, Elijah Muhammad's family and close relatives.

The relative improvement in material comfort caused a 'goal transformation' or displacement among the officials of the NOI to adjust and moderate the movement's extreme and uncompromising 'pure beliefs' and 'original policies' which had been advocated over the years. In this modification, certainly, the outgrowth of organisation and the huge accumulation of wealth engendered social mobility in the nature of the movement. Yinger sees the fluctuation of social mobility as a powerful source of changing religious commitment (Yinger, 1970). In the case of the NOI, Parenti has observed that these worldly interests and material conditions adulterated and undermined the transcendental values of the community (Parenti, 1964). Furthermore, at the individual level, in the late 1950s, Essien-Udom noted the impact of the socio-economic accomplishments of the NOI over members' incentives. He argues that 'members of the Nation appear to be economically more secure than many Negroes' as a result of their observance of the moral codes and economic principles of the leader. He concludes that 'an improved economic status tends to moderate the militancy of the members. In fact, this interest in the acquisition of wealth appears to be one of the important internal constraints on the possibility of the movement becoming politically significant or revolutionary' (Essien-Udom, 1970:170). After the split with the NOI, Malcolm described well that turning point in the goal transformation of the NOI.

Until 1961, until 1960, there was not a better organisation among Black people in this country than the Muslim movement. It was militant. It made the whole struggle of the Black man in this country pick up momentum because of the unity, the militancy, the tendency to be uncompromising. But after 1960, after Elijah Muhammad went over there [Muslim countries] in December of '59 and came back in January of '60 when he came back, the whole trend or direction that had formerly been taken began to change.⁽⁵⁾ And in that change there's a whole lot of other things that had come into the picture. But he began to be more mercenary. More interested in money in wealth (Malcolm X, 1992:118).

Structural conditions of religious groups are one of the important causes for schism. A number of studies have shown that organisational structure, power sharing and roles are determinants of schism (Wilson, 1961; Wilson, 1971; Gamson, 1975). When in the 1960s Elijah Muhammad appointed his family and close relatives to the NOI's organisational hierarchy, his nepotistic actions created internal constraints. Malcolm,

later, noted that structural problem. He said that ‘the movement itself began to deteriorate only after Elijah Muhammad put members of his own family in positions of authority, which weakened the structure and caused internal bickering and division and eventually the movement just petered out’ (Malcolm X, 1992:189).

More interestingly, the Muslim officials began to receive criticisms and constraints from inside the NOI, from young and politically inclined Muslims who desired to engage in more action together with civil rights organisations. All their demands to relax the *status quo* political restrictions of the NOI were refused by the Muslim officials. These kinds of conflicting norms and values engendered faults with the system and feelings of frustration, anomie and anger due to the religious group’s structural strain (Wilson, 1971). The NOI’s official policy did not change even though sometimes members were hurt or killed. Furthermore, when Malcolm had barely convinced Muhammad that the NOI would get involved in a big nation-wide campaign to launch a voter registration in the summer of 1962, that political activity was cancelled by the officials without any advance notice (Breitman, 1967). In this context, Wallis and Bruce speculate on the consequences of internal constraints in religious movements. They say that

Undermining institutional structure and patterns not only constitutes change and eliminates constraints upon further change, it also creates ambiguities and conflicts of policy and practice which leave the members without any clear guidelines to action (1986:124).

The NOI’s official policy has created a dichotomy among the older and younger members. While the older members were constantly watching the divine inspiration of Elijah Muhammad, the young Muslims wanted to be involved in action. Therefore, the *status quo* policies of the NOI caused frustration and dissatisfaction, mainly among young Muslims. Consequently, this political position of the NOI led the rank and file Muslims to perceive that a growing political differentiation was emerging between the Chicago officials and Malcolm. When he left the NOI, Malcolm spoke about his personal constraints and disappointments with the official policy of non-engagement and its possible consequences.

privately I was convinced that our Nation of Islam could be an even greater force in the American Black man’s overall struggle - if we engaged in more *action*. By that, I mean I thought privately that we should have amended, or relaxed, our general non-engagement policy. I felt the

very real potentiality that, considering the mercurial moods of the Black masses, this labelling of Muslims as 'talk only' could see us, powerful as we were, one day suddenly separated from the Negroes' front-line struggle (Malcolm X, 1968:397-398).

These polarisations over policies and ideals inside the NOI have been noted by Lomax (1964), Parenti (1964), and Lincoln (1973). In his classic work in this area, Lincoln, for instance, compared the impacts of the economic and political developments of the NOI in the 1960s which created polarisation of the direction of the policies of the movement.

As the movement [NOI] gained vested interests - real estate and commercial enterprises, as well as economic and political weight in the Black and White communities - one block of the Muslim leadership has become increasingly conservative. It will urge the case for maintaining a stable *status quo*, rather than risk the loss of so much that will have been so arduously gained. This block will very quickly realize that the Muslim gains can be protected only while there is a fairly stable White society in America (Lincoln, 1973:218).

Lincoln described the tendency of the second bloc, which were the young Muslims, to be

scornful of mere material and negotiable gains. Clinging to the spirit of the original revelation and holding it capable of continual renewal in each generation, it will demand a relentless war on the detested *status quo*, with its entrenched White domination (Lincoln, 1973:218).

As the works of Lomax, (1964), Goldman, (1979), Evanzz, (1992) and Perry, (1992) indicate Malcolm was more concerned with social doctrine and politics to translate the Black masses' aspirations, even by confronting the established political system. But Malcolm's inability and reluctance to moderate his revolutionary and militant rhetoric in the face of changed circumstances created an animosity and hostility among the Chicago officials towards him (Karenga, 1982).

Parenti has also observed that in the early 1960s, there were further changes and transformations in the organisational and political patterns of the NOI away from extreme militancy and nationalism towards a more moderate stance. He recorded several accommodationist signs from Muslim officials and the literature of the movement: a) a changed attitude towards integration; b) less emphasis on the separatist objectives of the movement; c) the emergence of conventional interest in political life; d) a recognition of the feasibility of improvement in the established political system; and e) a moderation of the rhetoric of hostility towards White people (Parenti, 1964:187-190).

According to Smelser's theory of collective behaviour, internal differentiation not only among members but also the social structure of groups creates an atmosphere leading to schism (Smelser, 1966). The NOI's organisational transformation and the divergence over policies and strategies between the central authority of the movement and Malcolm X were a 'pre-existing division' (Bruce, 1990; Ammerman, 1987). These different and conflicting interests in the NOI were already an everyday fact of life prior to the schism. Before the schism became actualised, a combination of other factors was needed to add to this strain (Wilson, 1971). Those contributing factors, although not primary causes, shaped or fed the schism. They will be examined in the next sections.

3.4.3. Power Struggle and Personal Conflict

Accounts of a number of schisms seem to suggest that motivational factors such as personal conflict and power struggle play an influential part in the process of division. Wilson argues that 'schism is essentially a group phenomenon, for it involves the coalescence of personal dissatisfaction into a dissenting clique or faction and its subsequent withdrawal' (Wilson, 1971:10).

Before these motivational factors culminated in a situation which led to a schism at the top of a religious group, they appeared first to occur in 'regional diversity' (Bruce, 1990) or 'subnetworks' (Stark and Bainbridge, 1985) of the organisation. Stark and Bainbridge, for example, discuss that 'schism in organisations or groups is most likely to occur along lines of cleavage. That is, when internal conflicts break out in a religious organisation, they usually do so between subnetworks that existed prior to the outbreak of dispute' (Stark and Bainbridge, 1985:101; Rochford, 1989). The personal conflict and the authority struggle have been felt in the NOI's local or subnetwork at New York base Mosque No 7. Among the officials of the Mosque, Minister Malcolm X, the secretary of the Mosque John 4X (then John Ali) and the Captain of FOI, Joseph X (then Yusuf Shah), personal conflicts arose by the late 1950s with disagreement over Mosque regulations and the share of authority (Perry, 1992:216-17; Evanzz, 1992).

On the other hand, Malcolm's clash with Captain Joseph X was mainly over a struggle for authority together with personal matters. According to Ulysses X, during his ministerial role, Malcolm treated Joseph badly. In order to take his revenge, Joseph circulated 'groundless allegations' that Minister Malcolm was having love affairs with young female Muslims at his Mosque.⁽⁷⁾ In view of these insulting rumours, Malcolm attempted several times to remove him as Captain but was unsuccessful because the NOI leadership in Chicago issued new regulations that dismissal and appointment of high positions in a mosque were under the authority of Chicago officials only (Perry, 1992:217; Goldman, 1979).

The other issue that Malcolm and Joseph were in conflict with each other was over their different approaches to the disciplinary procedure applied to Muslims who violate the laws and principles of the NOI. The essential problem between them, according to Sharon 10X and James 67X, was a struggle for authority; the two rivals were obliged to work with each other, yet they constantly trod on each other's authoritarian toes. Captain Joseph told James 67X his administrative formula, declaring 'Remember this! Presidents come, presidents go, but the generals remain' (Perry, 1992: 217-218).

With the appointment of John Ali as National Secretary of the NOI in Chicago, the locality of personal conflict and power struggle moved to the centre or at the organisational level. At the outset, the personality clash and power struggle were not between Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X, but between the ruling stratum and Malcolm X. In the early 1960s, the policy differences between the NOI's Chicago Officials and Malcolm, as pointed out earlier, were common, but the cleavage between them was deepened by personal antagonism and ambition.

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, Wilson maintains that schism occurs among 'the influential elite within' a religious movement and centres 'on the struggle for power' and 'ambition and desire for power as an important, perhaps often crucial, element in sect divisions. Personal animosities have arisen latent even between friends who have shared power' (Wilson, 1961:339-41). It can be perceived that similar kinds

of actions, in the case of NOI, between the Chicago administration and Malcolm X, played a part in the development of schism. As indicated earlier, in the early 1960s, Malcolm's public and organisational stature had risen sharply in the national media, university and college campuses and in the infrastructure of the NOI. In disseminating and representing Elijah Muhammad and his teachings, Malcolm enjoyed press and campus celebrity. His popularity and influence in the NOI had gone too far, and to some extent, Malcolm's name was identified with the NOI. His prominence and popular position engendered jealousy not only among the Chicago officials, but also among his minister colleagues in the NOI. Minister L. Farrakhan explains this passion of internal struggle in the community as follows:

there were many ministers and other workers in the Nation who wanted the attention that Malcolm got from the press, who wanted Malcolm's place of honor and esteem in the Black community, who wanted to be this warrior that Malcolm exemplified. People adored Malcolm, even though they were maybe afraid to say. So that kind of envy caused people within the movement to start sniping at Malcolm (Hardy and Pleasant, 1985:17).

Outside the movement, he overshadowed the influence of Chicago officials and even Elijah Muhammad's in every circle. Minister Farrakhan describes this situation indicating that 'Malcolm had become so popular that many writers had felt that Malcolm X was in fact the movement called the Nation of Islam' (Hardy and Pleasant, 1985:16). In Wilson's terms, it created "the discrepancy between formal and actual power, a great deal of confusion as to the true nature and locus of authority in the group' (Wilson, 1971:14). In the case of NOI, while Elijah Muhammad and the administration body in Chicago held the formal power, Malcolm represented the actual.

Under the vigilant jealousy of the Nation officials, Malcolm provided his detractors with two issues to undermine his credit in E Muhammad's eyes. These were, as Karenga describes, political mistakes on Malcolm's part; one was his dealing with the scandalous rumours about the Messenger's intimate relationships with his secretaries, and the other was his transgression of a direct instruction not to make any comment on President Kennedy's assassination (see details in Malcolm X, 1968; Goldman, 1979; Evanzz, 1992; Perry, 1992; DeCaro, 1994).

In the first case, shocked by the moral implications of his leader's relations with secretaries, Malcolm launched his own inquiry either to please his own curiosity or to prevent the spread of rumours and allegations that would ruin the NOI. To save the NOI's credit and reputation he desperately wanted to find a solution, so with the help of Wallace (then Imam W. D. Mohammed), Malcolm documented some Biblical and Quranic references in order to vindicate Elijah Muhammad's relations with his secretaries. However, Malcolm's efforts were reported by Captain Joseph of Mosque # 7 and Minister Louis X (then Minister Louis Farrakhan) to the Chicago officials who interpreted his actions as an attempt to undermine Elijah Muhammad's authority.

In the second case, the assassination of President John F Kennedy, Elijah Muhammad issued a directive to all the NOI's officials, ministers and labourers to refrain from making any statements whatsoever to the media. Contrary to the leader's decree Malcolm made his historic statement that the President's death was a case of 'the chicken coming home to roost' (Malcolm X, 1968). These developments provided a legitimate and golden opportunity for the NOI officials in Chicago to convince Elijah Muhammad to silence and then suspend Malcolm from his ministerial duties. This eventually engendered his defection from the NOI and resulted in schism.

In reality, the statement that Malcolm made about the assassination was, in Smelser's term, a 'precipitating factor' (Smelser, 1962) that provided a justification for direct action by symbolising and perhaps intensifying the issues of conflict (Wilson, 1971). On the one hand, underneath the surface, there seemed to lie jealousy, personality and power conflicts which developed between the ruling stratum and Malcolm and on the other hand, there were Malcolm's developing freedom and dissatisfaction with the NOI's *status quo* and conservative policies.

3.4.4. Interactional and Relational Factors

Zald and Ash argue that interaction among movement organisation may lead to co-operation, coalition and merger (1966). They give more emphasis, however, to the

importance of coalition and merger for interaction. They argue that these two 'may lead to new organisational identities, changes in the membership base, and changes in goals'. They further maintain, in general, that these two factors 'require ideological compatibility' (Zald and Ash, 1966:335).

When Malcolm left the NOI, there was no clear distinction between his religious and political teachings and the movement's. He was ambivalent about his defection and held conflicting notions in his mind. On the one hand, he was still preaching the Blackness of God and the demonic nature of Whites and regarding Elijah Muhammad as his leader and teacher. More importantly, he was still seeing that the analysis and solutions proposed by Muhammad, that is, 'complete separation', were accurate for the conditions of Blacks. On the other hand, in criticising the NOI's confined political teachings, Malcolm desired to cooperate with Black fraternal organisations by broadening the content of Black Nationalism. In this situation Malcolm was displaying similar attitudes to those of ex-members from other religious movements. As an ex-member of the NOI, Malcolm's position mirrors the findings of Beckford of ex-members of the Unification Church (UC) who still felt love and admiration towards practising members and, more interestingly, did not have a 'clear or well-grounded' picture of the religious movement that they used to belong to. Furthermore, he suggests this is the result of 'a high degree of confusion and ambivalence among ex-members about the precise nature of their feelings towards the cult' (Beckford, 1978: 109; 1985). In the case of Malcolm's defection, it is conceivable to see his ambivalence and confusion in the public and private statements he selectively reflected on, right after his split, concerning Elijah Muhammad and the NOI's programmes.⁽⁸⁾ While he was in favour of some aspects of the Nation, he was still critical of other aspects of it, particularly the political and organisational.

However, these clouds of confusion were clarified when Malcolm built intensive religious and political interactions and relations with other circles. DeCaro indicates rightly that interaction has been overlooked or given less emphasis by scholars in this area. Although most studies on the NOI accommodate the role of Malcolm in the

evolution of the movement, there is 'considerably less appreciation for the religious elements of Malcolm's impact on the NOI' (DeCaro, 1994:429).

Interaction is a process which does not occur abruptly. To observe its effects and consequences takes a long time and it also requires not only a one-way influence, but mutual influence. Interaction, therefore, contributes, most of the time, in finding a common ground among identical organisations, but sometimes it can bring about a distance between them. For my subject matter, interaction is likely to lead to and engender a proximity and alliance in order to make common cause. In the case of Malcolm, in particular, interaction broadened his horizons, both religious and political. Following his defection he attempted and sought to build emotional and organisational ties with his own kinds and co-religionists. I, therefore, assume that the interaction factor further accelerated Malcolm's alienation and differentiation from the NOI's beliefs and political objectives.

Malcolm probably had more interactions both at individual and organisational levels than any other members and officials of the NOI with both Black and Muslim leaders and organisations at home and abroad. As a matter of course, this interaction made a great impact on his political and religious perspectives. Accordingly, it may be seen that there are similar tendencies between Malcolm's attempts and what Zald and Ash propose for interaction, in order to form religious and political links with Muslim and African fraternal organisations and leaders. His encounters with co-religionists and state and political figures in Muslim and African countries during two long intensive trips in 1964 made an enormous influence on Malcolm. As a consequence of his interaction, Malcolm had to revise not only his religious beliefs, but also to tailor his political teachings (Perry, 1992; Munir, 1993; Tinaz, 1993; DeCaro, 1994). In other words, Malcolm abandoned the particularistic teachings of the NOI and embraced a pluralistic and universalistic conception of religion and politics.

3.4.4.1. Internalisation of Religious Understanding

Malcolm's disengagement from the NOI's religious beliefs had gradually developed over the years, through interaction and sometimes interpersonal negotiation with other mainstream Muslims in the USA and abroad. In maintaining this assumption, I mean that Malcolm did not suddenly and entirely change or modify his old theological and racial understandings when he encountered Muslims from different ethnic, racial and cultural origins at pilgrimage (Hajj). Prior to the Hajj in 1964, Malcolm met orthodox Muslims on both at personal and organisational level⁽⁹⁾ on several occasions (DeCaro, 1994). Nonetheless, after his defection, Malcolm's intensive interaction and confrontation with the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural International Muslim Community at Hajj were a turning point and culmination of his religious and racial understanding.

It is interesting to note the outcome of the gradual and processual changes in Malcolm's rhetoric and attitudes following upon his intensive interaction with orthodox Muslims. An example of this impact can be seen following his first interaction with the Muslim World in 1959. He wrote in the *Pittsburg Courier* of August 15, 1959,

The people of Arabia are just like our people in America in facial appearance. They are of many different shades, ranging from regal Black to rich brown. It is a safe postulation to say that 99 per cent of them would be Jim-crowed in the USA. But none are White (DeCaro, 1994:379, quoting from *Pittsburg Courier*, 15 August, 1959).

More importantly Malcolm noticed the racial tolerance.

There is no color prejudice among Moslems, for Islam teaches that all mortals are equal and brothers. Whereas the White Christians in the Western world teach this same thing without practising it. (*Ibid.*).

Although his impressions left him with the knotty problem of how to accommodate Elijah Muhammad's teachings concerning the mythological nature of White people, upon his return to the USA Malcolm apparently continued to assert that all Whites were devil and Blacks were divine and Muslim in nature.

On several occasions, Malcolm encountered foreign Muslim students with whom he had heated arguments about the NOI's religious beliefs of Islam and its doctrine of racial

peculiarity and hatred. Malcolm took these criticisms very seriously and could not ignore them. This is further evidence in support of my contention that Malcolm's break with the NOI was neither abrupt nor complete. In fact, his thinking evolved in a gradual process which was influenced by the ideas and the people with whom he came in contact (see for example, DeCaro, 1994:420-21). DeCaro described Malcolm's close friendship with a Sudanese student named Ahmed Osman, from Dartmouth College, who visited the Mosque No 7 in 1962. After listening to Malcolm's speech, he wanted to make some comments about the lecture. Osman told Malcolm that,

Many of this statements and the beliefs of the Black Muslims are contrary to the teachings of Islam, particularly the claim of Elijah Muhammad that he is the Messenger of God and the interpretation of the race problem (DeCaro, 1994:504).

In spite of the congregation's opposition, Malcolm let him make his points. But their point-counterpoint discussion did not reach any conclusion. Later, Osman kept in touch with Malcolm by sending sincere letters and providing Islamic literature. And Malcolm replied to Osman's letters asking him to send more Islamic literature and consulted with him over explanations of some Islamic issues. Between Malcolm and Osman was a genuine friendship eventually developed. After several interactions with other orthodox Muslims, he seemed to begin questioning his own beliefs, saying that 'if one was sincere in professing a religion, why should he balk at broadening his knowledge of that religion' (Malcolm, 1968:430). This kind of religious search has been encouraged by Wallace Muhammad (then Imam Warith D. Muhammad), Elijah Muhammad's son, whom Malcolm had always respected and consulted on religious issues. Imam W. D. Mohammed confirmed his influence on Malcolm saying that 'he [Malcolm] was curious but he was not that as informed in religion that I was, so he would depend on me to answer certain questions for him'⁽¹⁰⁾ (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995a). With regard to the impact and outcome of interaction and interpersonal relationships with mainstream Muslims even Imam W. D. Mohammed personally admits that the influence of Muslim individuals such as Jamil Diab,⁽¹¹⁾ and members of Muslim students associations that he associated with, contributed to his religious cognitive development (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995a).

As a result of his interactions with Muslim individuals in the early 1960s, even before his defection, Malcolm began to moderate his statements regarding religion and race issues. In 1963, Malcolm appeared at several media organs such as the Ben Hunter show in Los Angeles and a Washington D.C. radio interview. He made significant remarks that indicate the consequences of interactional and relational impacts. For example, in a radio interview, he hinted at more humanistic and religiously reconciliatory remarks.

When you are a Muslim, you don't look at the color of a man's skin [,] whether he is Black, Red White or Green or something like that; when you are a Muslim, you look at the man and judge him according to his conscious behavior (DeCaro, 1994:424-25; quoting from FBI file).

Of course Malcolm's interpersonal negotiations and interactions with not only Muslims but also with sympathetic Whites began slowly to influence the essence of his statements. For example, in the early 1960s Malcolm appeared to change his perception of White people.

Unless we call one White man, by name, a 'devil', we are not speaking of any *individual* White man. We are speaking of the *collective* White man's historical record (Malcolm, 1968:371).

By 1963, Malcolm further clarified his understanding of the 'White devil', epithet. As DeCaro points out, Malcolm judged White people, 'strictly on the basis of ethical, not biological terms'.

And many people in this country think we are against the White man because he is White. No, as a Muslim we don't look at the color of a man's skin; we are against the White man because of what he has done to the Black man (DeCaro, 1994:425; quoting from FBI file).

Certainly, as indicated above, Malcolm was apparently experiencing a process of detachment from the belief system of the NOI. DeCaro (1994) describes Malcolm's gradual and processual transition from the confinement of the NOI to the preliminary understanding of Islam as 'foreshadowing Mecca'.

Upon his defection in March 1964 and being set free from the straitjacket policies and teachings of the NOI Malcolm's interaction with other circles further intensified. Prior to his pilgrimage to Mecca and tour to Muslim and African states, when Malcolm attempted to form an organisation, he designed a pluralistic policy in order to attract and collaborate with Muslims, Christians and non-religious Blacks, nationalists and leftists. In other words, he tried to keep the perspective of the organisation as wide as possible.

He said that 'the organisation, I hoped to build would differ from the Nation of Islam in that it would embrace all faiths of Black men, and it would carry into practise what the Nation of Islam had only preached' (Malcolm X, 1968:427; Handler, 1964d). These kinds of co-operation, the policies and boundaries which he had drawn for his newly founded organisation named the Muslim Mosque Inc. (MMI), had been reached as a consequence of his long processual interactions and interpersonal negotiations with other circles.

In the weeks following his defection, Malcolm's primary concerns were to restore his racist image and to build religious ties with the Muslims. He was advised to make the Hajj by sympathetic Muslims with whom he interacted on several occasions (Essien-Udoms, 1991; A. Muhammad, 1995). During the Hajj, Malcolm was treated as a State guest and received warm hospitality and attention from Muslim personages and Saudi officials through contact names provided for him by Dr. Shawarbi, the head of Muslim Federation in the USA. He also encountered at the Hajj a sympathetic and friendly attitude from distinguished and ordinary Muslims of various racial, ethnic and national origins⁽¹²⁾ from all over the Muslim World. While relishing the privileges he was receiving (Handler, 1964e), at the same time he was confronting fundamental experiences of 'reconversion' or 'internalisation of conversion' to mainstream Islam as a result of observing the demonstration of Islamic beliefs: the true brotherhood, equality and unity regardless of colour, race and social status, and was broadening his religious understanding by reading the literature provided. In Lofland and Skonovd's (1981) conversion motifs, Malcolm was experiencing 'intellectual' and 'experimental' conversion. The most important feature of Malcolm's transformation had been developed as a result of the 'intensive interaction' between him and Muslim dignitaries and ordinary pilgrims at the Hajj. As Snow and Phillips maintain, that intensive interaction is 'the key to understanding of conversion' to the Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist movement in America (1980:444). I assume similarly, that the Hajj was a significant event for Malcolm's religious transformation because it is the largest collective ritual and 'one of the most potent unifying factors in the world of Islam' (Lewis, 1976:27). Thus, it generates a 'suitable network of communications' among all kinds of ethnic and

coloured Muslim peoples and provides once a year the opportunity for social, cultural, economic and religious interactions and exchanges. More importantly, it certainly engenders 'a sense of belonging to a single, vast whole', *Umma* (Lewis, 1976:27).

Malcolm reflected on his experiences, impressions and the impact of the Hajj and how it affected his religious and racial understandings in letters he sent to the press (Booker, 1964; Handler, 1964e) and close associates in the USA.

During the past seven days of this holy pilgrimage, while undergoing the rituals of the Hajj [pilgrimage], I have eaten from the same plate, drank from the same glass, slept on the same bed or rug, while praying to the same God ... with fellow Muslims whose skin was the Whitest of White, whose eyes were the bluest of blue, and whose hair was the blondest of blond - it was the first time in my life that I didn't see them as 'White' men [they] didn't regard themselves as 'White' (Handler, 1964e).

Comparing them with American Whites, Malcolm said

Their belief in the Oneness of God has actually made them so different from American Whites, their outer physical characteristics played no part at all in my mind during all my close associations with them' (*Ibid.*).

At the end of pilgrimage, Malcolm was forced to face fundamental and structural transformation of his formerly held understanding of religion and race and he came to the conclusion that

You may be shocked by these words coming from me. But on this pilgrimage, what I have seen, and experienced, has forced me to *re-arrange* much of my thought-patterns previously held, and to *toss aside* some of my previous conclusions (Malcolm X, 1968:454; Handler, 1964e).

The Hajj environment, therefore, provided for Malcolm, in Berger and Luckmann's terms, 'plausibility structures' (1966:154) wherein he found and experienced sincerity, racial tolerance, racial and colour harmonies, and above all the same faith and beliefs practised according to the text, the Qur'an. On the issue of defection from religious groups, Wright argues that a defector's adoption of a 'new plausibility structure' helps to legitimise his leaving a movement of which he used to be a member (Wright, 1987:75). Moreover, he maintains that the new plausibility structure 'provides a contrasting set of ideas and beliefs from which to discredit the old plausibility structure' (*Ibid.*). Similarly, while Malcolm was embracing the new understanding of religion, Islam, and a moderate racial policy, following his experiences at the Hajj, he began to question the exclusive nature of the religious and racial teachings of the NOI.

3.4.4.2. Rationalisation of Political and Organisational Objectives

The schism with the Nation was an inevitable precondition for Malcolm's ideological and political transformation because it liberated him from the confines of religio-political teachings. Once he had split with the NOI, he wished to co-operate with other civil rights organisations (Handler, 1964c). Previously, Malcolm advocated that 'separation' was the only solution, but on the day he declared his independence from the NOI, he said 'separation back to Africa is still a long-range program' (Malcolm, 1965:20). During this transition period, before going abroad, his notion of separatism and Black Nationalism changed (Spellman, 1964). He gradually abandoned advocating a separate state and he began to consider that Blacks should stay in the United States and 'fight for recognition as human beings ... the right to live as free humans in this society' (Malcolm X, 1965:51; Breitman, 1967; Breitman *et al.*, 1992).

Through the Hajj and his long trips to African and Middle East countries in 1964, Malcolm's political objectives were subjected to fundamental modification and rationalisation at the same time as his religious and racial understandings. At a press conference on May 21, when he was asked whether he still advocated separatism and return to Africa, he answered,

After speaking to African leaders, he was convinced that 'if Black men become involved in a philosophical, cultural and psychological migration back to Africa, they will benefit greatly in this country (Breitman, 1967:63).

Comparing the similar conditions of Jews, Malcolm said that 'we can learn much from the strategy used by the American Jews. They have never migrated physically to Israel, yet their cultural, philosophical and psychological ties to Israel have enhanced their political, economic and social position right there in America' (Booker, 1964).

Along with his gradual abandonment of separatism, Malcolm's understanding of Black nationalism was also periodically redefined.⁽¹³⁾ His particularistic and exclusivistic nature of political philosophy shifted from Black nationalism to internationalism and Pan-Africanism when he interacted and exchanged views with political leaders and revolutionaries such as Taher Kaid, a revolutionary and the Algerian Ambassador to

Ghana during his trips in Africa (see further his exchange of views with political and revolutionary figures in Africa and the Muslim World (Evanzz, 1992; Perry, 1992). His visit to Ghana especially was an inspirational source for his political rethinking (see Goldman, 1979; Essien-Udom, 1991). Thereafter, Black Nationalism became less appealing to him and he gradually abandoned it. More importantly, Malcolm's experiences abroad enabled him to perceive that the fundamental problem facing the Third World and coloured peoples was not race but the system of exploitation and the disadvantageous capitalist economic system. With a new synthesis of insights, accordingly, he appeared to comprehend that the AAs' problem was a part of that system, both domestic and international (Essien-Udom, 1991).

Later, Malcolm publicly admitted the influence of head of states and political leaders⁽¹⁴⁾ with whom he had long discussions, on his new political and racial perspectives. He said that 'the understanding that I got from conversations with these men ... I got broadened my scope so much that I felt I could see the problems confronting Black people in America and the Western Hemisphere with much greater clarity' (Malcolm X, 1992:111; Perry, 1989). Particularly on the race issue, Malcolm acknowledged their impact that '... listening to leaders like Nasser, Ben Bella and Nkrumah awakened me to the dangers of racism. I realized racism isn't just a Black and White problem' (Parks, 1965).

Malcolm's diplomatic tour did not only affect his political outlook, it also influenced on his organisational strategies. After having his views broadened and rationalised his objectives, he realised that the scope of his organisation, the MMI, was limited. Malcolm initially imagined that this organisation would embrace 'the active participation of all Negroes', but the very name of the organisation was an obstacle for such collective collaboration. In practice, it was prohibitively narrow and a hindrance to non-Muslims and non-believers who might wish to partake in Malcolm's cause (Breitman, 1967; Goldman, 1979).

On 24 June 1964, Malcolm publicly revealed the existence of the Organisation of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), modelled on the letter and the spirit of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) which was founded in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in May 1963 (Essien-Udom, 1991; Breitman, 1967). The new organisation's primary focus was 'to unite Afro-Americans and their organisations around a non-religious and non-sectarian constructive purpose for human rights' (Breitman, 1967:77). With this more politically and secularly oriented organisation, he expected to draw the widest possible spectrum of AAs to form 'one solid front'.

3.4.5. The US Governmental Manipulations in the Schism

Since the release of the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) documents and files through the Freedom of Information Act on 7 March 1974, several recent studies, which have heavily used the archives, have shown that governmental institutions had extensively penetrated into the Black Nationalist organisations in order to manipulate their internal problems by sometimes strategically placing informants and *agents provocateurs* and sometimes by installing wiretaps and bugs in their residential and organisational centres (Breitman *et al.*, 1976; Evanzz, 1992; Perry, 1992; Gardell, 1996). Although this factor is not an internal and organisational problem, but an external factor, when hostility and conflict was felt or became public, governmental manipulation shaped and directed dissension and schism in Black organisations.

The findings of these studies have already shed light on the role governmental institutions played in the conflict and schism of Black Nationalist groups. The FBI interest in the NOI, Gardell argues, goes far back to the late 1930s (Gardell, 1996). From the late 1950s onwards, the rapid growth of the NOI in organisation and number of members became public and attracted the attentions of governmental institutions. Since the role of governmental organisations has been well documented in the works of aforementioned scholars, there is no need to reiterate here the same arguments and findings. Instead I would like to reflect on the inside information that I gathered through

interviews and conversations with Muslim professionals and rank-and-file Muslims during the field research.

With new religious insights and political objectives, on his return, Malcolm began challenging Elijah Muhammad and the NOI on several radio and television talks. He particularly focused on Muhammad's domestic life making slanderous assaults against him. In doing so, he wanted to expose Elijah Muhammad as an 'immoral man', regarding him and his religious and political teachings as an obstacle to both Islam's spread and the development of political consciousness among AAs (Malcolm, 1992). Behind Malcolm's motives seemed to lie a belief that he was worthier than Muhammad religiously, morally and politically to lead and represent AAs. As a matter of course, this attitude engendered competition and counter attacks between the ranks of the NOI and Malcolm's supporters. Consequently, these attacks naturally incited the top officials and labourers of the NOI to launch counter-propaganda against Malcolm. All the professionals and officials of AAMs with whom I conducted interviews and had conversations with during the field research in Chicago,⁽¹⁵⁾ unanimously stated that Elijah Muhammad never ordered his followers to kill Malcolm. He always told them, 'leave him [Malcolm] alone ... that is between him and Allah' (Interviews, Dr A. Salaam, Imam D. Karim, Dr A. Shabazz; and Hardy and Pleasant, 1985:22). This is, of course, not an attempt to exonerate the NOI. The NOI high-ranking officials also contributed to this tense atmosphere, sometimes by statements and sometimes by deeds. Even today, many old NOI members admit that the movement was indirectly involved in this tight internal climate. Minister Farrakhan, for example, admits that,

In every movement, religious movement, on the earth where the prophetic figure is at the center, there are always zealots in that movement ... The history is full of example of zealots. We were zealots in our love for the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. And as long as Malcolm X was with Honorable E. Muhammad, we loved him. But when he turned away from the Hon. Elijah Muhammad and began to speak against the Hon. Elijah Muhammad. We were in the value of decision, we had to decide. Should we go with Malcolm, should we go with Elijah Muhammad, our real father, spiritually? So I and others, thousand of others, decided, we would be with Elijah Muhammad ... (Interview, Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

Following the split, a significant number of members left either with Malcolm or on their own. But the majority of the NOI stayed with Elijah Muhammad and displayed solidarity and unity against possible internal and external attacks in that critical period

(Dr A. Shabazz, 1996).⁽¹⁶⁾ Dr A. Salaam, who was the first professional to join the NOI in the mid-1950s, recalls Elijah Muhammad's recommendation to his followers.

When people attack me those of you around me you should defend me. I don't have to go out after them myself. It is not dignified for me to chase them. But you are my followers and ministers, you should not allow people to attack your leader (Interview, Dr A. Salaam, 1995b, verbatim).

For the sake of this defence, Dr Salaam continues to justify the position of Muslims who stood against Malcolm's and media attacks on Elijah Muhammad.

So obviously, our position was ... we have to defend our leader. We do not want people attacking him or downgrading him ... (*Ibid.*).

Similarly, Imam D. Karim assesses the feelings of Muslims about Elijah Muhammad.

there were a lot of tense moments. Then, anybody [any members of the NOI] it could be anybody. Actually, the Hon. Elijah Muhammad was the last word then ... just any alone negative comment, or just saying I disagree with Elijah Muhammad that was detrimental for some people. That how our minds and feelings were about this man. So, if somebody come right up publicly say something against E. Muhammad. That was, you're opening yourself a walking target, we call it. So it could be anybody' (Interview, D. Karim, 1995, verbatim).

Coming to the defence of their leader, the NOI members, assuming Elijah Muhammad's recommendation to defend him as a religious obligation, used very metaphorical language to express their anger towards Malcolm. Ministers and officials harshly criticised Malcolm in a series of articles in *Muhammad Speaks*, referring to his double-faced attitudes and accounts concerning Muhammad's domestic life and the presence of White Muslims prior to his Hajj. Jeremiah X and Joseph X, for example, attacked Malcolm calling him 'the worst hypocrite Islam has produced' (1964:16). James 3X also described Malcolm as 'the worst traitor Negroes had experienced' (1964:11). However, Minister Louis X's (now Minister Louis Farrakhan) remarks on Malcolm had been deliberately publicised in the media since his fame began rising from the mid-1980s onwards and gave the impression that he directly contributed to the tension. In 4 December 1964 edition of *Muhammad Speaks*, Minister Farrakhan wrote,

Only those who wish to be led to hell, or to their doom, will follow Malcolm. The die is set and Malcolm shall not escape, especially after such foolish talk about his benefactor [Elijah Muhammad] in trying to rob him of the divine glory which Allah has bestowed upon him. Such a man as Malcolm is worthy of death if it had not been for Muhammad's confidence in Allah for victory over the enemies (Louis X, 1964:11-15).

It was not only Minister Farrakhan who wrote and made furious and pathetic remarks about Malcolm, several top officials also made similar statements. In addition to these personal pronouncements, the edition of *Muhammad Speaks* of 15 January 1965 gave wide coverage to the denunciations of Malcolm. The cartoons depicted Malcolm's severed head rolling down the road to a grave for traitors and the editorial called him a Judas and his tongue should be cut off and delivered to the doorstep of Muhammad.

The results of these personal denunciations and Malcolm's continued counter attacks were to encourage the rank-and-files on both sides to harm each other. Although Elijah Muhammad did not give a direct order, those developments were implicitly to encourage zealots or, in Imam W. D. Mohammed's term, 'Black devils' (Barboza, 1994:151) to do something against the traitors. On the other hand, there were some attempts at mediation and conciliatory gestures to prevent the tragic consequences that would deeply hurt both sides. Malcolm, for example, in an open letter to Elijah Muhammad, urged an end to the conflict, which threatened to flare into open violence between the two communities. He said that 'instead of wasting all this energy fighting each other ... we should be working in unity with other leaders and organisations in an effort to solve the very serious problems facing all Afro-Americans' (Malcolm X, 1964c). When the hostility culminated in the momentous early days of 1965, Elijah Muhammad made conciliatory statements that defectors 'are to be forgiven if they renounce hypocrisy' (Perry, 1992:340). And finally, just a week before the assassination, Wallace Muhammad (then Imam W. D. Mohammed) spoke with and met Malcolm at the Escort Executive House in Chicago. According to Imam D. Karim, who was a close associate of Wallace, 'he was actually trying to help the brother [Malcolm] and save him' (Interview, Imam D. Karim, 1995). But all those attempts failed to help. Having closely monitored these developments, the FBI skilfully fed and manipulated the tension to exacerbate the situation by means of its planted agents in both factions (Evanzz, 1992; Gardell, 1995). Consequently, this volatile climate, in Minister Farrakhan's words,

Created not only anger but it created hatred. And some of the zealots wanted to harm Malcolm X, There is no question about that. So the government knew this. And all that was to manipulate this

energy and help to create circumstances where Malcolm's assassination could be completed either by agent provocateurs within the movement or zealot Muslims who really disobey Elijah Muhammad (Interview, Minister Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim; see Hardy and Pleasant, 1985; Curry, 1990).

Within the context of those developments, Malcolm X was assassinated on 21 February, 1965, as he was about to begin his address at the Audubon Ballroom. The NOI was publicly blamed and three members were charged with the slaying. Muslim officials do not deny the part the NOI's zealot members played in the tragedy. Imam W. D. Mohammed, a close friend of Malcolm, evaluates the case accurately.

I don't think the Nation of Islam planned the assassination of Malcolm X. I assume outsiders assassinated Malcolm X but Muslims were used (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995a, verbatim).

In conclusion, Lincoln argues that Malcolm X's defection and his subsequent assassination shook the NOI organisationally, although its programmes continued 'as before in the economic sphere, his charisma, organising genius and his polemical ability were sorely missed' for the next decade. The schism and factionalism weakened the NOI's 'organisational dynamism' and 'potential membership' (Gerlach and Hine, 1972). After his death, his two organisations, the MMI and the OAAU, did not survive. However, his name and legacy have been restored and his contributions were highly appreciated when Imam W. D. Mohammed became leader in 1975. To heal the wound that emerged between Malcolm X supporters and majority of the NOI members upon his defection and subsequently his assassination, in 1976, Imam W. D. Mohammed renamed the NOI Harlem Temple No 7 in order to honour him as 'Malcolm Shabbaz Masjid' where once Malcolm used to work as resident Minister of the movement (Hunter, 1976). Even Malcolm's religious plans and mission have been revitalised since 1975 onwards when Wallace D. Muhammad (now Imam W. D. Mohammed) took over the leadership of the NOI and brought the movement to mainstream Islam and American Society by changing its religious and political teachings and restructuring its organisational patterns. These developments will be discussed briefly in Chapter VII. Malcolm, in his autobiography, prophesied these developments. He said,

[Elijah] Muhammad's son Wallace Muhammad, who had expressed to me his conviction that the only possible salvation for the Nation of Islam would be its accepting and projecting a better understanding of Orthodox Islam (Malcolm X, 1968:453).

Chapter Three: Notes

1) The legendary status and mystery of W. D. Fard is still surrounded by various interpretations and comments. According to Dr. Shabazz, 'W. D. Fard or Master Farad Muhammad never thought that he was a God in person, and Elijah Muhammad his Messenger or Apostle'. Following his disappearance,

'When Elijah began to introduce new teachings that W. D. Fard was God in Person and he himself was his Messenger after 1934, most majority, up to 25.000 members, of the NOI turned against him'. Later on, Elijah Muhammad told his followers that he had private talks with Master Farad, from time to time, and 'he said these things, and that things to me' (Interview, Dr A. Shabazz, 1995a, verbatim).

During my interview with Dr. Shabazz, I asked about Fard's mysterious disappearance and allegations of his deportation. Dr. Shabazz recalls Elijah Muhammad's claims that 'he accompanied him [Fard] at airport'. In his own research, Dr. Shabazz has found no deportation paper in the name of Farad. When Imam W. D. Mohammed assumed the leadership of the NOI, 'he said Fard left for California and started to do business. Imam identified Fard as Muhammad Abdullāh (Interviews, Dr Shabazz, 1995a; Aisha Mustapha, 1999). In 1976, the Imam astonished his followers by announcing 'I've got news for you, Farad Muhammad follows me now' and 'W. D. Fard alive and personally in touch with their new leader [Imam Warith D. Mohammed]'. He also claimed that 'I can go to the telephone and dial his number anytime I want to' (Dennis and Sciolino, 1976). In 1994, 'Farad Muhammad died which his funeral held in California. He was Muhammad Abdullah. It has come out in the *Muslim Journal*. And a lot of people said that was not Farad, but Imam said it was Farad' (Interview, Dr A. Shabazz, 1995a). The mystery surrounding Fard's identity, disappearance and status still remain unsolved.

2) Because of Elijah's earlier confidence and trust in Malcolm, Muhammad appointed him in 1959 as his ambassador to visit and represent Elijah Muhammad and the NOI at international level in Muslim Countries and Africa (Lincoln, 1973). A further example of Elijah Muhammad's trust in Malcolm was that he left Malcolm X in charge of the

NOI's affairs when he and two of his sons made Omra (small pilgrimage or hajj that is undertaken outside the hajj season) to the Holy City, Mecca, and visited several Muslim countries and religious and political figures in the early 1960s (Essien-Udom, 1970; Lincoln, 1973, Malcolm X, 1968; Tinaz, 1993).

3) Elijah Muhammad, similarly, praised his favourite lieutenant declaring that 'Minister Malcolm is a much better speaker than I am, and I am blessed to have such an assistant' (Worthy, 1962:35). He reiterated his compliment to Malcolm in the NOI's 1962 Annual Saviour Day saying that 'He [Malcolm] is one of the most faithful ministers that I have. He will go everywhere - North, South, East or West, to China - if I say go to China, he will go there. So I thank Allah for my Brother Malcolm' (Essien-Udom, 1970:177; De Caro, 1994).

4) Mainly, these are the Russian, Chinese, Algerian and Cuban revolutions (Breitman, ed, 1967: 7-11).

5) The impact of interaction or relation with Muslims and Muslim countries on the divergence of the NOI's objectives and ideology will be discussed in detail later.

6) Twice the *New York Amsterdam News* reported the differences between Malcolm and the NOI Officials, 6 July and 20 July 1963 issues (Perry, 1991:456).

7) Malcolm's name was involved in rumours of romantic affairs with several young Muslim girls named Evelyn Williams, Robin, Lucille and Heather (Perry, 1992; Lee and Wiley, 1993). According to Minister Farrakhan and Yusuf Shah, behind Malcolm's publicly critical remarks and vilification of Elijah Muhammad's conduct and morality in impregnating his young secretaries lies the fact that Malcolm, to some extent, also dallied with these NOI female members.

8) Malcolm's pronouncements after the schism have already been briefly pointed out in the section on organisational and political economic causes. Between 8 March and 13

April 1964, he made, on the one hand, several conciliatory statements praising the teachings and programmes of the NOI and, on the other hand, criticised aspects of it. (For further information on Malcolm's remarks see Malcolm, 1965, 1970; Handler, 1964c; Spellman, 1964; Breitman, 1967; Evanzz, 1992).

9) Dr Alauddin Shabazz, Interview, 21 August, 1995.

10) Imam W. D. Mohammed also maintains that Elijah Muhammad encouraged Malcolm to work closely with his son.

11) A Palestinian teacher who was employed by Elijah Muhammad at the University of Islam, the elementary and high school of the NOI to teach just Arabic not Islam (Tinaz, 1993).

12) At the Hajj, Malcolm encountered a number of important Muslim personages, whose sincerity, courteous and amicable treatment made a great impact on him, namely, Prince Faisal of Saudi Arabia, Abdul Aziz Maged, the Deputy Chief of Protocol for Prince Faisal, Hussein Amini, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Kasem Gulek of the Turkish Parliament, Sheikh Abdullah Eraif, the Mayor of Mecca, and two Dr. Azzams (Malcolm, 1968).

13) For the chronological changes and modifications of Malcolm's understanding of separatism and Black Nationalism see (Breitman, 1967; Goldman, 1979).

14) Those heads of states and political figures that Malcolm had intensive interactions and conversation with were President J. Nyerere of Tanzania, President J. Kenyatta of Kenya, President Azikiwe of Nigeria, President Nkrumah of Ghana, President Toure of Guinea, and Prime Minister M. Obote of Uganda (Malcolm X, 1992:111; Perry, 1989).

15) Interviews: Imam W. D. Mohammed, Minister Louis Farrakhan, Dr A. Salaam, Dr A. Shabazz, Dr Farid I. Muhammad, Imam D. Karim and other Muslim individuals at

Masjid Ar-Rahman, Masjid Al-Muminun, Harvey Islamic Center and Mosque Maryam in the Chicago area.

16) Right after the assassination of Malcolm X in February 1965, Imam W. D. Mohammed made public apology before the NOI's Muslims at 1965 Saviour's Day and asked his father, the Hon. Elijah Muhammad and officials to accept him back the movement. During my interview I asked why he returned the NOI although he was not happy and comfortable with the movement's beliefs. He said he wanted to show a unity and strength against outsiders and thought it was best interest of the community, the NOI, at that critical time (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995a).

CHAPTER IV

Conversion or Reversion?

4.1. Muslims by Nature?

It seems odd to interpret the conversion experiences of people who convert to any form of Islam as 'Muslims by Nature'. But there is an almost unanimous concurrence among significant numbers of Muslim converts, regardless of their race, ethnicity, culture and origin of religion, who maintain that they sensed that they had 'always been Muslims' and alleged that their conversion had emerged 'naturally' (Khan, 1978; Poston, 1991, 1992; Kose, 1996). This statement has more significance and authenticity as far as one particular race and ethnicity is concerned, namely, the religious experiences of African American Muslims, with specific reference to the members of the Nation of Islam (NOI) both in the past and at present.

The statement 'Muslims by Nature' is found on posters, T-shirts and caps at all the major activities and diverse rituals of the NOI. Although several other African-American Muslim (hereafter AAM) communities express similar feelings, the concept of 'Muslim by Nature', particularly for the various descendants of the NOI, derives from three sources. First, according to Elijah Muhammad, Islam is the original and 'the Natural religion of the Black Nation. It is the nature in which we are made' (E. Muhammad, 1965:80).⁽¹⁾ He continues 'Islam is righteousness and he who would believe in it and do the Will of Allah (God) must be by nature one born of Allah. The only people born are the Black Nation of which the so-called Negroes are descendants'. Reducing Islam to a particular race, Muhammad further maintains that 'Islam is actually *our* religion by nature. It is the religion of Allah (God) and not a European organized white man's religion' (E. Muhammad, n.d: 51; 1957). Presuming this teaching as a truth, most AAMs in the past and even now believe that all Blacks have always been Muslims and assume that those who came to the New World, the Americas, through the slave trade lost their original religion because of the many years of slavery. For

them, becoming Muslim or a member of the NOI is to reclaim their lost religion and identity, and to return to the ancestral faith. They describe their experience, therefore, not as a conversion, but a reversion.⁽²⁾

The second belief is also closely related to the first. Though it is impossible to document the exact number of Muslim slaves, various AAM communities, along with the NOI, both conventional and unconventional, emotionally claim that a significant number of the slaves brought to the Americas were Muslims (Winters, 1975; Austin, 1984; A. Muhammad, 1984; Rashed, 1991; Nyang, 1993). For AAMs and particularly for the NOI and its descendant groups, becoming a Muslim was/is racially and ethnically interpreted as 'to reunite with their own kind' (Essien-Udom, 1970:185). Islam, therefore, revives the ethnic heritage and genetic memories of their past, and assists in the reconstruction of their cultural and spiritual ties with Africa, where Islam spread from Arabia centuries ago. In this sense, therefore, their conversion to Islam, is, as Heirich asserts, a change in one's 'sense of ultimate grounding' or 'sense of root reality' (1977:673-74).

Thirdly, Islam appeals to most African-Americans because of its egalitarianism, multiracial tolerance and belief in universal brotherhood regardless of race and ethnic origin. For them, Islam provides hope, clear direction, discipline, meaning and purpose, and gives great emphasis to moral and conservative family values. These expressions of Islam can also be seen among Muslims affiliated to more conventional AAM communities⁽³⁾ who perceive it not only as a religion, but also as a 'natural way of life' that addresses and answers all the spiritual, natural and material needs of human beings (Goldman, 1989; Frankel, 1994; Tinaz, 1995). To endorse their understanding of Islam they frequently refer to the textual sources of Islam, the Qur'an and Hadiths - the Prophet Muhammad's sayings and deeds - especially racial and ethnic tolerance, diversity and equality.⁽⁴⁾ For racially and nationalistically motivated AAM groups⁽⁵⁾, however, Islam is seen as what Waardenburg terms, 'a Vehicle of Protest' (1985), that boosts their resistance and struggle against racism, injustice, social and economic deprivations, and the dominant values of white society and its system. They view Islam, as Conrad Worrill says, 'as more fighting religion' against

racism whereas 'Christianity is seen as kind of passive turn-the-other-cheek religion' (Terry, 1993).

Using this set of beliefs, set out above, I have attempted to interpret the conversion experiences of AAs to Islam as 'Muslims by Nature'. From this point of view, the AAMs' assertions, particularly the first two, recall Hervieu-Lèger's contention that religion as a memory passes from generation to generation.⁽⁶⁾ She argues that the feeling of belonging and the process of religious identification 'depends on the group or individual being conscious of sharing with others a stock of references to the past and a remembered experience to hand down to future generations' (Hervieu-Lèger, 1994:125). In this process, 'a specific mode of believing' and 'a particular way of organising meanings and practices' gradually emerge (Davie, 1996:109). However, these beliefs and practices manifest themselves in two different forms; one as a real form in social groups, and the other as 'an imaginary genealogy which maps out the generation of believers both in the past and in the future' (p. 110). For my subject matter, the most important form is the latter, which Hervieu-Leger describes as 'memory'. Davie defines it as 'the chain of believing' that

Makes the individual believer a member of the community - a community which gathers past, present and future members - and the tradition which becomes the basis of legitimation for this religious belief. From this point of view, religion is the ideological, symbolic and social device by which both individual and collective awareness of belonging to a particular lineage of believers is created, maintained, developed and controlled (Davie, 1996:110).

Hervieu-Leger supports her arguments with empirical data documenting the rise of emotional communities and the emergence of ethno-religions that display the changing faces of religion in the modern world. In the former, she focuses particularly on the significance of memory in the formation of religious identity in young French Catholics. She closely examines the Catholic Church's campaigns of New Evangelisation in Europe that aim at the emotional mobilisation of memory in order to preserve and reconstitute the religious identity and heritage of Europe. Such efforts at mobilisation were seen in the huge gatherings held in the presence of the Pope during his personal visits to sacred Catholic sites, *lieux de mémoire*, which were used as a means to effect the emotional intensification and renovation of memory and religious identity (Hervieu-Leger, 1994:127-130).

Using a perspective similar to the French Catholics' efforts at mobilisation to restore their religious identity, the AAMs, particularly the NOI, allege that their ancestors, who were taken from Africa in the chain of slavery, were Muslims. With this claim they try emotionally and nostalgically to restore and reclaim their 'lost' and 'stolen' religious, racial and ethnic identity which remains only in their memories. They believe, therefore, that they are reverting to their ancestors' faith. In this way, Islam helps them retrieve religious and ethnic memory and heritage and gain a feeling of belonging to a specific community and race of believers. Their memory of the past, however, is imaginary and reconstructed. By contrast, the French Catholics' memory is both real and reinvented.⁽⁷⁾

For the above mentioned reasons, the AAMs prefer to describe their religious and identity transformations as 'reversion' rather than 'conversion'. Since there is no specific theory and study of 'reversion' in sociology in general, or in the sociology of religion and new religious movements in particular, I will use and take into account a wide range of studies on conversion and recruitment, both empirical and theoretical, in exploring and analysing the religious experiences of AAMs, specifically, the NOI during the leadership of Elijah Muhammad and its descendant communities namely, those of Imam W. D. Mohammed and Minister Louis Farrakhan. I will also selectively use widely recognised sample studies of conversion and recruitment in my study of the NOI.

In this chapter, first I would like to review and clarify the boundaries and confusions of those terms which have been used by sociologists of religion to explain the phenomenon of conversion. Second, I will look at the models of theoretical and empirical conversion widely held in the sociology of religion or the perspectives of new religious movements. Finally, I will attempt to form my own approach to explore the conversion or reversion experiences of the AAs to Islam in light of the above-mentioned perspectives.

4.2. Conversion to Islam and the NOI

Over the past two decades, the new religious movements (NRMs), and the topic of conversion, have been major themes in the sociology of religion. The bulk of literature focuses on indigenous and implanted predominantly white religious groups in the West and, except for a few studies (Gerlach and Hine, 1970; Singer, 1979, 1988; Mamiya, 1982; Baer, 1984; Baer and Singer, 1992), relatively little emphasis has been given to black religious groups. In particular, Black Islamic movements, such as the NOI, have not been classified as NRMs (Mamiya, 1988), despite their growing importance and significance from the 1960s.

When Islam is concerned, the phenomenon of conversion has been little explored. The existing handful of studies on conversion to Islam examine two different dimensions: historical and contemporary. The historical emphasis (Bulliet, 1979; Levtzion, 1979; Watt, 1979) is on reviewing conversion and proselytising to Islam from its early history and its dissemination over centuries from the Arab peninsula to a wide range of geographical areas through conquests, traders, Muslim population movements, interactions with indigenous or host people and Sufi activities in the medieval period and beyond. The contemporary emphasis is on conversion to Islam in Western settings where Islam is growing and expanding through the conversion of people from other faiths and traditions (Khan, 1978; Poston, 1992; Anway, 1996; Kose, 1996), along with immigrants from the Muslim World and through the reproduction of their cultural, social and organisational activities (Vaughn et al. 1983; Haddad, 1991; Nielsen, 1992; Haddad and Smith, 1994; Vertovec and Peach, 1997). The current literature on conversion to Islam takes a mostly psychological and descriptive point of view (Khan, 1978; Anway, 1996). The subject of conversion to Islam has received little sociological analysis, specifically in the perspective of the sociology of religion (Poston, 1992; Kose, 1996). Even these few existing studies have taken a primarily psychological and descriptive rather than sociological approach to the subject. Their subject matter and focus is on individuals who come from very diverse ethnic, socio-cultural and religious backgrounds, not on particular Islamic movements or organisations that have

specific organisational structures, teachings, policies and recruitment strategies. Because of these diverse features, I cannot use these studies as a sample for my study, although I will sometimes refer to them where common characteristics of conversion to Islam are concerned, for example, age, gender, marriage, education, motives and reasons of converts. My study of the AAs' conversion to Islam in general, and to the NOI in particular, is distinctive in comparison with studies of Islamic conversion for the following reasons. First, all but one of the respondents of my study are Blacks, therefore they share the same racial and ethnic identity.⁽⁸⁾ Second, they share more or less similar experiences such as racial, social and economic inequalities. Third, their social context and 'milieu' are similar, that is, the urban black neighbourhood. Fourth, the NOI is distinctive because those people who join give more priority to racial and ethnic pride, consciousness and identity, unity, socio-economic improvement and ethno-religious brotherhood than religious and spiritual issues.

4.3. Conceptual Boundary Maintenance and Confusions

In this section I will first discuss the interpretations of personal religious transformations and then I will turn to the theories, models and explanations of religious transformations at the personal level.

To interpret people's religious experiences and transitions from one religion to another, changes within compartments of the same religion, sects, cults and groups, and strong attachment and commitment to a particular movement, social science and lay researchers have used several terms, most commonly, *conversion* and *recruitment*, but also *alternation*, *consolidation* and *adhesion*. These diverse conceptualisations have arisen from a variety of religious traditions, sects and movements which people have joined and experienced. These concepts have also derived from the different methods and frameworks that researchers have employed, and the divergent patterns they have emphasised in studying the numerous religious movements which have arisen in various social, political and cultural settings.

Among these concepts the term 'conversion' has been most widely used. It is broadly defined as a 'radical transformation of consciousness, including self and identity' (Snow and Machalek, 1984; Machalek and Snow, 1993:54). It is also interpreted as 'a radical reorganization of identity, meaning and life' (Travisano, 1970:600). Heirich has described conversion as 'the process of changing a sense of root reality' or 'a conscious shift in one's sense of grounding' (Heirich, 1977:674). Yet these notions of conversion as radical personal change and reorganisation are not appropriate in accounting for the multiple aspects and types of identity and religious transition. The degrees of variation and duration that conversion involves, the sudden, abrupt and serial processes, and its impact on the individual is drastic, fundamental and dramatic. Consequently, several researchers have made distinctions between these terms and tried to separate the concept of conversion from the other interpretations of identity and religious changes (Nock, 1933; Travisano, 1970; Zygmunt, 1972; Gordon, 1974; Pilarzyk, 1978; Balch, 1985).

The most salient fact is that boundary maintenance and confusion arose between the two concepts of conversion and recruitment. These two terms are often assumed to be the same and therefore juxtaposed by the majority of scholars. Nevertheless, some sociologists have raised crucial distinctions between them, for example Zygmunt (1972), Greil and Rudy, (1984), Balch (1985). Zygmunt has strongly maintained that recruitment and conversion are two different stages and processes. Balch has also pointed out 'the tendency to confuse recruitment with conversion'. He argues that these two 'processes are analytically and empirically distinct, but researchers tend to ignore the difference. Recruitment refers to joining a group, while conversion implies a radical change in belief and personal identity' (Balch, 1985:28).

Other researchers have also felt these conceptual ambiguities and confusions, which occur when changes happen within components of the same religion and identity discourses. To distinguish this transition from one's radical and drastic reorganisation and reinterpretation of this universe of discourse, Travisano (1970), for example, contended that there might be a distinction between these two transitions. Inspired by Berger's (1963) broadly elaborated

‘meaning systems’ and his preference for using the term *alternation* to *conversion* in order to avoid religious connotations, Trivisano distinguished between the degrees of religious and identity transformations. He has modified Berger’s gross statements on alternation, noting that conversion and alternation are two different types of identity change. He argues and contrasts that

Alternations and conversions ... are different kinds of identity change. Alternations are transitions to identities which are prescribed or at least permitted within the person’s established universes of discourse. Conversions are transitions to identities which are proscribed within the person’s established universes of discourse, and which exist in universes of discourse that negate these formerly established ones. The ideal typical conversion can be thought of as the embracing a negative identity. The person becomes something which was specifically prohibited (Trivisano, 1970:601).

Trivisano illustrates the difference between these two transitions by using the examples of ‘Hebrew Christians’ for conversion and ‘Jewish Unitarian’ for alternation. He maintains that ‘the differences between a Jew becoming a fundamental Christian (a process of conversion) and a Jew becoming a member of a Unitarian Society (a process of alternation) are simply enormous’ (1970:598). In the first case, transitions are ‘drastic’. They entail a change in the “‘informing aspect” of one’s life or biography’ and ask an individual to deny his ‘former identity’. Conversion, therefore, is ‘a radical reorganization of identity, meaning and life’ (p. 600). In the latter case, however, changes are ‘relatively easily accomplished’ and ‘do not involve a radical’ transformation in one’s ‘universe of discourse and informing aspect’, but these are natural processes and ‘grow out of existing programs of behavior’ (p. 601). He subsequently illustrates these different characters of change on his subject samples by maintaining that

The Hebrew Christian has broken with his past, the Jewish Unitarian has not. The Hebrew Christian has completely reorganized his life, the Jewish Unitarian has not. In short, the Hebrew Christian has a new principle of organization for his action and autobiography, while the Jewish Unitarian has simply extended his old programs in one of many permissible directions ... (pp. 599-600).

The problem of conceptualising conversion is further continued when the degree and intensity of religious and identity changes are taken into account. To distinguish the intensity of conversion, Gordon (1974) and Pilarzyk (1978), for example, have used Trivisano’s dichotomy as a theoretical tool for a starting point. Gordon realised that there are different types of conversion in the Jesus Movement. To understand these identity

changes, he introduced an additional type to the two existing types that he calls 'consolidation'. The first of the two types he describes as 'a radical discontinuity in the person's life such as the adaptation of an importantly different religion or political identity': he calls this type of identity change 'conversion'. The second type, on the contrary, 'does not involve radical discontinuity', but is rather 'a new stage or extension of former identity', this Gordon calls '*alteration*' (that is, Travisano's *alternation*). The third type, Gordon introduced, is '*consolidation*' that is 'the adoption of an identity combines two prior but contradictory identities' (1974:165-66).

Pilarzyk (1978) used Travisano's dichotomy to describe two different religious movements: the ISKCON and the Divine Light Mission. In these two religious organisational structures he contrasted two processes of change: conversion and alternation.

My reason for reviewing the above conceptual arguments and confusions is that some of these terms will prove useful as analytical tools in accounting for the religious and identity changes of the AAMs, namely, members of the NOI both in the past and present circumstances. A single conceptualisation is insufficient to explain the complex nature of their religious experiences, because the AAMs' religious and identity transitions have very complex features; there is not simply religious conversion, but also racial, ethnic and political awareness and consciousness. These multiple dimensions of religious change are required for various conceptualisations in order to concisely understand the subject matter. For example, while recruitment denotes the NOI's recruitment grounds, channels, and networks, and socio-economic and political factors and circumstances which were/are the conditions of black ghettos or neighbourhoods in big urban areas, conversion designates radical and substantial changes to the individual Black's religion, identity and consciousness, the impact of the NOI on his/her rhetorics, behaviour and his/her universe of discourse.

As well as these two commonly and widely used terms, *alternation* or *alteration* and Richardson's *conversion careers* (1980) are also applicable where the AAs' racial, ethnic

and political motivations are concerned. Prior to their joining the NOI, the AAs had affiliated with several Black Nationalist organisations (Sahib, 1951; Essien-Udom, 1970). When they became dissatisfied with current Black Nationalist and religious movements they left them and moved to other groups that had a more appealing and articulated ideology and set of objectives. The AAs were, what Sahib calls, 'mobile seeker' or in Straus' word, 'seekers', looking for 'serial alternatives' (Richardson, 1980:49). Therefore, when the AAs joined to the NOI, they had already, more or less, become racially and nationalistically conscious and motivated. Their predisposing features will be explored further in the subsequent chapters with the introduction of empirical data.

4.4. Theoretical Frameworks and Models of Conversion

Before proceeding to a review of the theoretical and experimental conversion models widely held in the sociology of religion or new religious movements' perspectives that are my primary concern for comparison of my subject matter, I need briefly to summarise the psychological approaches of conversion.

4.4.1. Psychological Perspectives of Conversion

Although interest in religious conversion goes back as far as the beginning of the twentieth century, mostly in the discipline of psychology (James, 1902; Starbuck, 1911), research interest in the phenomenon as a major subject in the humanities and social sciences has grown considerably since the publication of Lofland and Stark's seminal work (1965). It is not necessary from my point of view to discuss psychological studies of religious conversion in detail at this point but a reliable survey of existing studies can be found in Rambo's book (1993). Clearly, many attempts have been made to understand why people join and convert to both unconventional and conventional NRMs, and these rely on mainly two perspectives; one is psychological, psychiatric and deterministic and the other is sociological. The first perspective tends to be dominated by models such as 'brainwashing', 'mind control', and 'coercive persuasion' which have gained a lot of popularity in the

public sphere and the mass media through their negative and alarming connotations. Several researchers, largely in clinical psychology and psychiatry disciplines, advocate these models, maintaining that cults or NRMs use the above techniques and methods to control and manipulate new converts according to their objectives. And eventually, through their procedures, cults strip the novice's former identity and disposition, first neutralising and then making him/her dependent on their resources. Since new devotees are believed to be so radically and dramatically changed the only way to save and restore their previous dispositions is by 'deprogramming' (Enroth, 1977; Conway and Siegelman, 1978; Clark, 1979; Delgado, 1979; Singer, 1979).

However, these kinds of absolutist and reductionist generalisations were not warmly welcomed by social scientists, particularly among sociologists. Further, sociologists have tended to be critical of these models. They realised that the general applicability of these approaches was very limited and inadequate when they found that a significant rate of defection and disengagement happened voluntarily (Beckford, 1978b, 1985; Robbins and Anthony, 1980; Barker, 1984; Wright, 1987).

Having given a brief outline of psychological approaches to conversion although these are not my main focus and do not constitute a framework for studying AAMs' religious experiences, I will now turn to sociological perspectives and models of conversion studies.

4.4.2. Sociological Models and Approaches of Conversion

Most of the sociological perspectives of conversion and recruitment have been, one way or another, categorically influenced by the Lofland-Stark classic conversion model. I will now examine more closely the main features of the model in question.

4.4.2.1. The Lofland-Stark Process Model

The publication of the Lofland-Stark conversion model (1965; Lofland, 1966) has inspired and shed light on subsequent sociological studies of conversion of new, revivalist and schismatic religious movements. According to their ‘value-added process model’, which arose from their seminal study of early followers of Sun Myung Moon in the West Coast, California, in the early 1960s, an individual has to proceed through seven sequential stages in order to become a convert. Conversion can only be accomplished when the following ‘necessary and sufficient conditions’ are present.

For conversion, a person must (1) experience enduring, actually felt tensions, (2) within a religious problem-solving perspective, (3) which leads him to define himself as a religious seeker; (4) encountering the [religious group] at a turning point in his life, (5) wherein an affective bond is formed (or pre-exists) with one or more converts, (6) where extra-cult attachments are absent or neutralized, (7) and, where, if he is to become a deployable agent, he is exposed to intensive interaction (Lofland and Stark, 1965:874).

When Lofland and Stark initially formulated their gross approach, they never claimed that their model was widely applicable for conversion in all types of religious groups. Even Lofland raised that issue later, indicating that

Stark and I did not feel it necessary to wear anyone’s specific model when we went to look at conversion. I would urge now that people ought not so compulsively wear the tinted spectacles wrought by Lofland and Stark when they go to look at conversion (Lofland, 1977:816-17).

Nevertheless, on account of the Lofland-Stark model’s general terms and aspects, which embrace many factors and conditions, a number of subsequent researchers have treated it as widely applicable in studies of conversion processes in such organisationally, religiously and contextually diverse groups such as Hare Krishna (Judah, 1974), Divine Light Mission (Downton, 1980), Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism (Snow and Phillips, 1980), a UFO cult (Balch and Taylor, 1977), the Church of Sun (Lynch, 1977), a fundamentalist Christian group called ‘Crusade House’ (Austin, 1977), a group of Jesus People known as ‘Crusade Communal Organisation’ (Richardson and Stewart, 1977; Richardson *et al.*, 1978, 1979), Mormons (Seggar and Kunz, 1972), and a Mormon splinter group known as the Levites (Baer, 1978). However, while some of these researchers tried to gauge the model’s applicability on other religious groups (Seggar and Kunz, 1972; Austin, 1977; Richardson

and Stewart, 1977; Downton, 1980; Snow and Phillips, 1980; Bankston *et al.*, 1981), others have used it to support their own perspectives and data. Moreover, some of the above and other analytical studies of the Lofland-Stark process model have further modified and refined the model by assimilating other factors: for example, dispositional factors such as 'tension', and 'religious problem-solving,' and situational factors such as 'turning point'. But they seem to converge on other patterns of the model such as 'seekership', 'affective bonds', and 'intensive interaction' that are generally assumed to be applicable to a wide range of religious movements. Here, it is not necessary from my point of view to elaborate further upon these patterns, since reliable analyses have already been done (see, for example, Richardson and Stewart, 1977; Snow and Phillips, 1980; Greil and Rudy, 1984).⁽⁹⁾ Instead, I would like to suggest new models which are derived from and inspired, to some extent, by Lofland-Stark's gross formulation; each is concentrated on particular aspects of the conversion phenomenon. These include the activist model, the drift model, the organisational approach, the convert's account and social or faith networks and I will analyse each in turn.

4.4.2.2. Activist or Seekership Models

There was a general tendency in studies of conversion to assume that conversion has been achieved passively, the assumption being that factors around and outside the individual mostly influence and function in this process rather than his/her own free will. This assumption has tended to dominate psychological approaches to the conversion phenomenon and even, to some extent, in sociological perspectives, until Lofland's (1977) critical remarks on their initial formulation. He acknowledged that 'the world-saver' model embodies a thoroughly 'passive' actor's journey that is largely channelled and run by social and environmental factors. He also pointed out that 'the model was, in fact, against an interactionist aspect of the conversion issue' (1977:817). Instead of reiterating the applicability of their model, he encouraged sociologists to focus on other facets of the phenomenon such as the convert's own motives and efforts to change him/herself. Soon after Lofland's remarks, a growing number of sociologists attempted to develop activist

models, in different forms, in order to determine a more active and seeker's role in the conversion process (Straus, 1976, 1979; Balch and Taylor, 1977; Balch, 1979, 1980; Bromley and Shupe, 1979, 1986). All these studies tended to be critical of the brainwashing and deterministic approaches of conversion.

The first attempt at these activist models was initiated by Straus. He began to develop a model by criticising earlier studies of identity change that employs 'an image of humans as essentially passive creations of their circumstances' (1976:252). He argued that this kind of 'passivist' approach is misleading. Then he tried to formulate his model of active 'seeking' and 'creative transformation' that aims 'to counter passivist assumptions by starting from the individual human acting creatively within a natural life setting in order to construct a satisfying life' (*Ibid*). This innovative and provocative activist paradigm of conversion has further been discussed in contrast with passivist approaches, in his later article (Straus, 1979). Straus maintained that

Sociologists have conventionally approached religious conversion as something that happens to a person who is destabilized by external and internal forces and then brought to commit the self to a conversionist group by social-interactive pressures applied by the 'trip' (as I will generically denote 'sect', 'cults' and other religious or quasi-religious collectivities) and its agents. This stands in contrast to an alternative paradigm of the individual *seeker* striving and strategizing to achieve meaningful change in his or her life experience, and which treats the groups and others involved in this process as salesmen, skills, coaches, guides, and helper - themselves typically converts further alone in their own personal quests (1979:158).

He, therefore, considers that conversion has been achieved by consciously searching and actively learning within the 'trips of social context' that he calls 'personal and collective accomplishment' (Straus, 1979). The basic proposition of Straus is that 'seekers', both individuals and collectives are more likely to manage their own transformations through a series of tactics and strategies such as 'social networks, chance encounters, mass media and any other available sources of information' (Straus, 1979:162), in order to attain their own quest for spiritual meaning.

Similarly, Balch and Taylor (1977), in their study of a UFO cult, maintain that the seeker can experience conversion in both social and cultural settings without necessarily

‘interactions’ and ‘affective bonds’ between group members and prospective members and these are believed to be key factors in the conversion process (Snow and Phillips, 1980: Snow *et al.*, 1980; Greil and Rudy, 1984). Balch and Taylor contend that ‘the seeker lives in a social milieu’ that ‘consists of a loosely integrated network of seekers’ who shift from one group to another ‘in search of metaphysical truth’. In that context, the seeker is not scorned, on the contrary, he is ‘respected because he is trying to learn and grow’ (Balch and Taylor, 1977: 850). They describe this activity as ‘the role of seeker’ because he/she co-operates to convert him/herself willingly. Later, Balch (1979) severely criticises psychological approaches to the conversion phenomenon. He concludes that the first imperative in learning a role is ‘to act like a convert’, referring to voluntarily and consciously taking the part of ‘seeker’, and then ‘genuine conviction develops later ... after intense involvement’ (Balch, 1980:142).

Another explanation of the activist model has been developed by Bromley and Shupe (1979, 1986), which is similar to Balch’s role-learning model. They formulated role theory as an alternative model to the motivational or psychological approach to conversion.⁽¹⁰⁾ They proposed the role theory approach in order to explain ‘the affiliative process and the development of commitment’ to religious groups, not emphasising the motivations that account for why people join, but rather focusing on how an individual begins to learn roles through interactions between the individual and the religious group. Eventually, the interaction and role-acting generate cognitive and behavioural changes according to the group’s prescribed tenets of what is assumed as conversion (Bromley and Shupe, 1979: 161-2). As such, their formulation represents similarities to the activist approach to conversion.

Apart from the above mentioned arguments, the activist approach to conversion has also been fragmentarily discussed in earlier studies, for example, Travisano (1970), Gordon (1974), Richardson (1980). These sociologists have, in one way or another, implied an activist treatment of conversion in which the individual, as an active subject, directs his/her own path by seeking and actively involving in identity and religious transformations.

Subsequently, the activist approach has been further elaborated and analysed within the frameworks of various conversion motifs or patterns (Lofland and Skonovd, 1981, 1983), and paradigms and types (Richardson, 1985; Kilbourne and Richardson, 1988). Lofland and Skonovd, for example, argue that two out of their six motifs, 'intellectual' and 'experimental', connote the 'activist' model of conversion. After reviewing different approaches to conversion, both old or traditional - what he calls the 'Pauline model' - and new, Richardson (1985) asserted, using Kuhn's (1962) term that all efforts in studies of conversion are nothing less than a 'paradigm shift'. Absorbing several activist formulations of conversion, Richardson seems to be critical of the notion of brainwashing: he advocates a more activist model of conversion that emphasises the active and creative 'seeking' role of the individual propensities. This new approach, called 'active agency' (Kilbourne and Richardson, 1988), to the study of the conversion phenomenon has attained more importance and recognition among sociologists of religion, who see it as an 'alternative paradigm'.

4.4.2.3. Drift Model

Long and Hadden (1983) attempted to develop a more general model of conversion by combining two major and distinct approaches, the 'brainwashing' and the 'social drift' models. While the former was popular among psychologists and psychiatrists, the latter was favoured more by sociologists. They developed a new model by synthesising these polarised studies of conversion into two disciplines. These two different models, they maintain, spot 'a central, but only partial, aspect of cult conversion process. Neither model by itself is capable of comprehending the apparent duality of cult life, for each is built on a fundamental denial of the reality perceived by the other' (Long and Hadden, 1983:2). Long and Hadden propose a more general and synthesising model which integrates the 'dual reality' of conversion if it is considered a part of the 'socialization process'. They assert that the polarisation of studies of the same phenomenon derived from these two models as 'different objects of interest'. While the brainwashing model places the emphasis on 'cult members' efforts to convert outsiders', the drift model focuses on 'the experience those

outsiders have as they become converts'. Long and Hadden maintain that empirical studies in each model embody 'descriptions of both elements in the socialization process' (p. 3). They therefore assume that these two models include two important dimensions of the socialisation process; the group's recruitment tactics to gain new members and the peculiar propensities of members. Thus they conclude that 'both the brainwashing and social drift models implicitly make the assumption of one way determinism which characterizes classic assumptions in socialization theory. Analysis of interaction directs attention to both members and novices as active, creative participants in the conversion-socialization process' (p. 7). Finally, they show the applicability and practicality of their socialisation formulation by using as an example recruitment and commitment to the Unification Church (UC).

4.4.2.4. Organisational Approach

Several studies have concentrated more generally on the organisational structure of social movements which illustrate their impact on recruitment and affiliation processes (Zald and Ash, 1966; Gerlach and Hine, 1970; Bromley and Shupe, 1979b; Lofland and Richardson, 1984; Snow, 1987). These contend that there is a close relationship between organisational structure, the movement's mobilisation of its members and success. Greil and Rudy argue that the organisational approach is, in fact, an alternative to the process-model approach in that it 'emphasizes the way in which organisational patterns of interaction are structured so as to encourage the acceptance of a new world view' (1984:319).

Gerlach and Hine complain that the organisational pattern has been largely neglected. They maintain that 'one of the most significant and least understood aspects of a movement is its organisation, or infrastructure' (1970: 33). Their work on conversion and affiliation to the Pentecostal and Black Power movements is dominated by a view of the recruitment and commitment phenomenon that considers that predisposing factors are insignificant. They emphasise rather the importance of interaction and pre-existing relationships in friendship and kinship networks for recruitment to a religious group.

For the organisational approach to conversion, Gerlach and Hine maintain that informal organisational structures are more contributory to effective mobilisation. Moreover, they put forward the view that a movement's organisation is more likely to be successful, particularly if its organisational infrastructure such as leadership, hierarchy and decision making is decentralised, and if its component units, small and large, are loosely combined in a segmented pattern but are still attached to each other in a reticulate fashion (1970:33-78). Snow also notes similar patterns and organisational characters in the Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist movement in America (Snow, 1987). Therefore these studies suggest that organisational patterns are likely to be more conducive to conversion.

4.4.2.5. Converts' Accounts of Conversion

There is disagreement in the study of conversion on how converts' accounts of their religious experiences have to be treated. This stems mainly from two different approaches to the analytic status of converts' verbal accounts of their conversion as a source of data for interpretation and analysis (Snow and Machalek, 1984; Robbins, 1988). Generally, in a conventional sociological approach, actors' descriptions of their experiences have been regarded as objective resources for the sociologist. Therefore converts' retrospective accounts should also provide reliable information on their past experiences. Wallis and Bruce (1986) have recently supported this perspective. However, several sociologists have questioned this customary sociological stance, proposing that testimonies of converts have to be considered as subjects of analysis rather than as objective resources for interpretation of their conversion (Taylor, 1976, 1978; Beckford, 1978a, 1983; Snow and Machalek, 1984). Beckford and Taylor, in particular, attempt to theorise that a convert's account is not merely the raw data of one's personal religious experience, but the achievement of the convert that combines personal experience with organisational rationales, expectations, beliefs and symbolism of the group which the individual desires to join. Beckford, for example, argues that among Jehovah's Witnesses 'conversion accounts' are 'expressions of practical reasoning about the problem for them of discovering appropriate ways to describe what supposedly happened in the course of their conversion' (1978a:251). The organisation

provides a formula that converts use to pattern their behaviours and accounts of conversion; some features are stressed and others abandoned 'in conformity with the ethos of the Watchtower movement' (p. 253). The Witnesses' accounts of their conversions are progressive and predominantly cognitive in orientation to the group's beliefs and ideology. For them conversion does not 'happen', but is an 'achieved' phenomenon (p. 256). Their accounts reflect that they are actively involved in working for their conversion. In this process, converts' accounts compose 'constructions or reconstruction of experiences' (p. 260) in accordance with the group's rationale for interpreting certain experiences as religious conversions. In his work, Beckford points out that conversion to a religious group could best be recognised and understood as a process whereby converts learn to construct or reconstruct 'appropriate' verbal accounts of their personal religious evolution. But these personal accounts should not be treated simply as idiosyncratic constructions, they are also regarded as encapsulations of the general ideology and rationale of a religious group.

Both Beckford (1978a, 1983) and Taylor (1976, 1978) recommend that sociologists should not take conversion accounts at face value and accept them as objective data, but take them as sociolinguistic phenomena deserving of analysis and explanation of the convert's active transformation and relationship to a particular religious movement.

4.4.2.6. Social or Faith Networks

Most social or faith networks are primarily concerned with recruitment rather than conversion. This approach focuses largely on the procedures and strategies of recruitment to religious movements prior to making a firm decision to join (that is, conversion). The interest in these policies and methods has considerably increased among sociologists of religion, that is, how people are involved in and encountered with, and through which ways and avenues they are recruited into religious organisations (Gerlach and Hine, 1970; Bibby and Brinkerhoff, 1974; Harrison, 1974; Heirich, 1977; Snow *et al*, 1980; Snow and Phillips, 1980; Stark and Bainbridge, 1980; Rochford, 1982, 1985).

However, in earlier studies, the recruitment issue was treated as the consequences of ideological appeals and deprivations to which social and religious movements and organisations offer answers (Wilson, 1959; Smelser, 1963; Glock and Stark, 1965). Glock (1964), for example, attempted to explain the origins and developments of new movements, both social and religious, that tend to recruit people who have grievances and suffer a variety of deprivations. Those who were recruited to a particular movement chose one whose ideology answers most of the problems they have undergone. Later, with Stark, Glock came to propose that deprivation explains not only conversion to new movements but all religious tendencies (Glock and Stark, 1965; Stark and Bainbridge, 1980).⁽¹¹⁾ But the focus on recruitment patterns has shifted from ideological and deprivational perspectives to interactional and relational following Lofland-Stark process model (1965) in which they included 'cult affective bonds' and 'intensive interaction' as two of the seven factors necessary for conversion. Subsequent research has confirmed the significance of these two conditions (for example, Harrison, 1974; Heirich, 1977; Lofland, 1977; Stark and Bainbridge, 1980; Snow and Phillips, 1980; Lofland and Skonovd, 1981, 1983). This more recent interactionist approach to the recruitment process has been overtly critical of the traditional perspectives which focused on the ideological and deprivational.

According to this more recent, widely-held perspective, social ties, pre-existing and interpersonal relations between movement members and prospective recruits are the primary and even indispensable channel of recruitment for a large number of religious movements. Its main emphasis is on how people encounter and make contact with members of a religious group. Through these avenues the information bridge is built, the credibility of the group's appeals enhanced and the pressure on the individual to join a group achieved (Snow and Machalek, 1984). However, interactional and relational processes and functions differ from one group to another depending on the organisational structure of a religious movement and its recruitment strategies. While among non-communal groups like Pentecostals, Evangelicals and Buddhists the importance of social networks has been found to be very high in recruitment, among communal groups their influence has been relatively small except in the UC and the ISKCON, where a significant proportion of their members

were recruited through interactional and relational conduits (Snow and Machalek, 1984). These different recruitment patterns derive from distinctive organisational structures, the exclusive recruitment strategies and participation of religious groups (see, for example, Beckford (1975a, 1975b), Snow *et al* (1980) and Rochford (1982, 1985).

Gerlach and Hine's recruitment model contends that pre-existing relationships between members and non-members in various socio-spatial settings such as 'kinship, neighbourhood, community, patron-client, fellow membership' and 'a variety of types of friendship' affect positively the recruitment process (Gerlach and Hine, 1970:97). But when Beckford applied their model to his research two areas of the model contradicted his findings; first 'the model exaggerates the number of potential relationships for recruitment' to the Jehovah's Witnesses (JW); and second 'the model overlooks the most important recruitment strategy which he sees as 'the carefully prepared and rehearsed "door-step" interaction between evangelist and householder' strategy that is more effective than pre-existing ties (1975b: 906-7). This empirical study shows that the generalisation of pre-existing relations and the role of social ties in the recruitment process are not always determinants in the growth and spread of religious movements.

Snow *et al.* (1980) and Rochford (1982, 1985) advocate differential recruitment strategies that attempt to explain the phenomenon in interactional and relational terms, rather than social psychological and motivational analysis. Snow *et al.*, particularly, argue that

the underlying assumption that some people are more susceptible than others to movement participation, that view deflects attention from the fact that recruitment cannot occur without prior contact with a recruitment agent. The potential participant has to be informed about and introduced into a particular movement (Snow *et al.* 1980:789).

Through this interactionist perspective, it can be seen that many people join a religious movement through an encounter with its members. After examining data on a variety of differential recruitment processes in relation to a wide range of religious and social movements, Snow *et al.* (1980) come to the conclusion that 'the probability of being recruited into a particular movement is largely a function of two conditions: (1) links to one or more movement members through a pre-existing or emergent interpersonal tie; and (2)

the absence of a countervailing networks' (1980:798). Consequently, they show the applicability of the social network approach to recruitment by comparing data obtained from studies on ISKCON and Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism. Subsequently, the role and efficacy of this approach to the recruitment process have been substantiated by the studies of Rochford (1982, 1985) and Stark (1984).

However, the social network or interactionist approach to recruitment does not solely confine its interpretations to the relational process, and to the interaction between recruits and members as the basis for group participation and increase in its membership. The social network also does not guarantee someone's joining in a movement. We could find a considerable number of cases where people do not want to join a movement, although they have been in contact with that movement for a long time. Some movements have their own specific recruitment grounds and policies in which they recruit most of their members through ways other than social networks. This point raises the question of generalisability of the interactionist approach and suggests the involvement of other factors as determinants in differential recruitment (Rochford, 1985). At this point, Snow *et al.* (1980) and Snow and Rochford (1983)⁽¹²⁾ consider two important factors, structural availability and the alignment process, as determinants of differential recruitment.

The idea of structural availability aims to explain why some individuals rather than others prefer a particular religious group to others. This specific decision-making process is strongly affected by an individual's commitments and relations (Snow *et al.*, 1980; Rochford, 1985). Rochford argues that 'the ability to pursue a particular line of action depends in large part upon the constraints put on an individual by other roles and social relationships' (1985:77). But the outcome, the individual's participation in and joining of a particular movement, is still closely linked to his/her relationships and to the position and availability of alternative networks and groups. Snow *et al.*, speculate on this consequence and consider two propositions:

- (i) The fewer and the weaker the social ties to alternative networks, the greater the structural availability for movement participation.
- (ii) The greater the structural availability for participation, the greater the probability of accepting the recruitment 'invitation' (1980:794).

Though social networks and structural availability are essential factors in the recruitment process, they are not sufficient conditions as far as the prospective member's cognitive states and the movement's ideology are concerned. To fill this gap, Snow *et al.* (1980), Snow and Rochford (1983) and Rochford (1985) propose the alignment process which suggests that the prospective member's former cognitive states have to form a coherence if membership is considered to be permanent rather than temporary. But this adjustment can only be attained after a long process of mutual interaction between new recruits and other senior members of the movement, and socialisation and integration into the movement (Rochford, 1985:84).

Snow *et al.*'s challenging approach to recruitment is subjected to harsh criticism by Wallis and Bruce (1982, 1986). In their article entitled 'Network and Clockwork', they assess critically two aspects of Snow *et al.*'s formulation; first, their concept of network and second, structural availability (1982). They argue that 'Snow *et al.* fail to appreciate that recruitment strategies are not independent of movements' goals and beliefs about the world' (1982:104). They continue that for differential recruitment patterns and policies of structurally diverse and sometimes opposite movements, 'a function of networks' does not form a unique explanation.

The function of the social network approach is, therefore, questionable, because it does not give adequate emphasis to the circumstantial and contextual conditions where social or religious movements arise. More specifically, it raises the question of the validity and necessity of this perspective for those people who experience similar social and economic strains and for those who inhabit identical racial and ethnic areas where they encounter and become acquainted with each other in one way or another on a daily basis, and know of the existences, goals and beliefs of analogous movements that emerged in the same socio-spatial settings yet did not join these movements. These points seem to be supported by the arguments of Balch and Taylor (1977) and Balch (1980). As has been argued earlier, they maintain that seekers who live in the social and cultural contexts do not necessarily need the 'interaction' and 'affective bond', that are the primary components of the social network approach, to join a religious movement. Because of the nature of the social and

cultural environment where seekers are loosely integrated with each other and move from one group to another 'in search of metaphysical truth' (1977:850), there is no need for a well structured and established network for recruitment.

4.5. The Multivariate Approach to Account for the Religious Experiences of NOI Members

The complex, multiple and changing aspects of the AAMs' religious conversion experiences, both in the past and at present, will be studied and analysed in light of the findings of those major sociological models and approaches to recruitment and conversion that I have briefly looked at above. I consider, as Richardson and Stewart (1977) suggest that conversion is a 'multievent' phenomenon, assuming that there are more factors and elements involved in the experience rather than a single one. Richardson (1980), furthermore, puts forward the notion of 'conversion career', that is, it is possible to have multiple conversions through testing 'serial alternatives' by which is meant the sequential trying out of new beliefs and identities in an effort to resolve 'felt difficulties' (1980:49). I, therefore, propose a multivariate approach to explore the multi-faceted aspects of AAMs' conversion experiences. In the context of AAMs' conversion, it can be seen that each of these models serves an explanatory function. However, it is impossible to apply the entire components of each model, even the whole components of a single model. Further, some of these components are inapplicable anyway. Therefore, only selective aspects of these perspectives will be used. Here, I just want to show concisely the appropriateness of the use of widely held sociological approaches. For example, the AAMs proceeded through the stages and conditions described by the Lofland-Stark model, but not necessarily through every stage and condition. They had felt for a considerable time tensions, strain, economic and social deprivations or frustrations and wished to change their bad fortune and solve their problems, not necessarily through religious perspectives, but rather, through political and nationalistic solutions. Islam, they assumed, was an alternative to Christianity, and since other channels such as the political were closed to them, they sought a more satisfactory religious system or organisation in order to find answers to their religious,

social and racial discontents. They experienced a 'turning point' in their lives by rejecting their 'old universe of discourse' and identity, sometimes through affective bonds and interpersonal ties, and sometimes deliberately and accidentally in the social and cultural context of the Black neighbourhoods. They became acquainted with members of the NOI in a given context, the movement's beliefs and goals, and then with intensive interaction they joined the movement and became a registered member/Muslim or in Lofland-Stark's term, 'a deployable agent'.

In terms of the activist model, the AAMs could be described as 'seekers' who consciously and actively work in a 'social milieu' or 'context' in order to manage their personal, and overall Blacks in general, collective transformations through a series of tactics and strategies that shift from one religiously, politically or racially motivated group to another in search of religious, social and economic liberations by learning role-models prescribed by the NOI.

With regard to organisational patterns, the NOI has been more successful and has attracted more recruits over the years than other Black religious groups in urban areas of the USA because of its well-disciplined, established, authoritative, militant and uncompromising organisational structure, and its concrete, promising and clearly defined goals, agendas and racially and religiously appealing beliefs.

The issue of converts' accounts of their religious experiences is an important approach for the understanding of AAMs' conversion to Islam. Most studies on the NOI, except a few, for example, Sahib (1951), Essien-Udom (1962), Howard (1965) and Mamiya (1982), have used already published materials rather than empirical data collected through field research and NOI members' testimonies and accounts of their religious experience and transformation along the lines and requirements of the NOI's organisational rationales, beliefs and expectations. This can be seen in the descriptions the AAMs give of their conversion to Islam, the way they speak and more apparent, aspects of the way they dress, their behaviour or the manner which the of NOI members display. Using Beckford (1978a,

1983) and Taylor's (1976, 1978) methodological treatments of converts' accounts, the AAMs' testimonies and accounts of their conversion will be treated in this work as subjects of analysis rather than as objective and reliable data.

Finally, the significance of the social network for my subject matter varies. The reason for this is that AAs, particularly those converts to the NOI, convert to Islam through numerous avenues. Over the years, AAs who have encountered members of the NOI, have heard of the existence, beliefs and objectives of the movement through diverse channels. In the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s they came across NOI members accidentally and unintentionally in the 'cultic' or 'social milieu' of the 'black ghettos' without the 'faith' or 'social' networks that require 'intensive interaction' and 'affective' interpersonal relationships. Within these settings, they learned of the presence of the NOI by 'actively searching' (Balch and Taylor, 1977). Similarly AAs have learned of the NOI through face-to-face encounters, and 'the door-to-door sermons' (Beckford, 1975a, 1975b) given by the NOI in Black neighbourhoods. AAs have also become familiar with the NOI and its members through pre-existing ties such as relatives, friendships, the neighbourhood etc. (Gerlach and Hine, 1970). In addition to these channels, the NOI's recruitment grounds have expanded from the early 1960s onwards, to take in public rallies and speaking engagements, its own materials, the media, including newspapers and publications.

Apart from these widely-held components of conversion and recruitment to most religious movements, I would like to emphasise the importance of two particular elements in my multivariate approach to conversion to the NOI or a particular form of Islam, African American Islam. These are the emotional and deprivational issues that pertain in the wider social context of black religious groups, where they arise, develop and appeal (see Singer, 1988). She argues that 'it is only in the light of the wider Black experience in the U.S. that we can understand the emergence of the messianic-religious milieu in the Black subculture that was the spawning ground of' most of the racially and nationalistically motivated black religious movements (Singer, 1988:187). On the emotional element, Singer is referring to the alienation that Blacks have experienced through the racist and class attitudes of

mainstream American society, its values and systems. On the other elements of deprivation Singer discusses the frustrations that Blacks have experienced in association with social and economic deprivations⁽¹³⁾ (1988:186-7). The majority of black religious movements concentrate on these two contextual factors in order to attract and appeal to the Black masses (Baer, 1984; Baer and Singer, 1992). As an ethno-religious movement, the NOI has given more specific priorities to racial discrimination, social and economic exploitations as a recruitment strategy. I find, therefore, these elements very useful in exploring of the recruitment and conversion of AAMs' to the NOI.

Chapter Four: Notes

1) In his first book, *The Supreme Wisdom I*, Elijah Muhammad emphatically declared that 'Islam is the original religion of all black mankind. There is no doubt about it' (1957:31). His category of 'the Black mankind' includes all races, black, yellow, and brown except white.

2) Essien-Udom has reached a similar conclusion, but he describes the religious experiences of members of the NOI as a 'reconversion' not a reversion (1970:186).

3) These AAM communities are, namely, Imam W. D. Mohammed's community, Muslim American Society (MAS), the Darul Islam of Imam Jamil Al-Amin (formerly H. Rap Brown, Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Minister of Justice of the Black Panther Party) (Al-Amin, 1994), the Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood of Imam Abdur-Rashid (Wormser, 1994) and the Hanafi Sect.

4) In the Masjids of Imam W. D. Mohammed's Ministry in the Chicago area like Masjid Ar-Rahman and Masjid Al-Muminun (these two masjids have recently been sold and relocated), and Harvey Islamic Center, Imams quite often address the congregation at the weekly Friday Prayers, the Sunday Ta'lim Courses and special social and cultural activities on the Islamic point of view on racial and ethnic tolerance, diversity and unity (Tinaz, 1995). Here are some of their frequent references to the Qur'an and the Hadiths.

O Mankind ! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into Nations and Tribes, that Ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. (Qur'an, 49: 13)

The most honoured of you in the sight of God is that he is the most devout one. The Arab has no superiority or privilege over non-Arab, and non-Arab over Arab. And there is also no superiority, black skinned over white skinned and vice versa. The real superiority is gained only with piety and devotion (The Prophet Muhammad's last Sermon delivered during his pilgrimage).

5) There are several schismatic splinter groups of the NOI that still keep the old language and rhetoric of black nationalism: Minister L. Farrakhan, Silis Muhammad, Abass Rassoull, Emmanuel A. Muhammad, John Muhammad and the Five Percenters.

6) I will refer here mainly to Grace Davie's article (1996) which provides a very helpful review and comments on the work of Daniele Hervieu-Leger. See further details of Hervieu-Leger's arguments of religion as a memory in her book, *La religion pour memoire* (Paris: Cerf, 1993).

7) While I was trying to relate the religious experiences of AAs to a theoretical framework Professor J. A. Beckford directed my attention to Hervieu-Leger's argument that religion as a memory passes from generation to generation (personal communication, 2 July, 1998).

8) Nevertheless, during 11 months of field research, mainly in the Chicago area, two occasions in Detroit and once in New York City, I have encountered and observed several white Muslims at Masjids affiliated to Imam W. D. Mohammed's Ministry, a very few at Mosque Maryam, Minister L. Farrakhan's the Nation of Islam National Center in Chicago and one on a visit to Muhammad Mosque No: 1 in Detroit. Muhammad Al-Ahari, who is a white Muslim convert of Albanian descent, joined the NOI in 1989, filled in the Pledge Card (see Appendix II) and returned it to Mosque Maryam officials. He was told that they would respond to him later, but since then, he has heard nothing. I asked him why he wanted to join the NOI, and he told me that he wanted to discipline himself and be better organised. He also told me that there were some other white members of the NOI of Japanese and Mexican origin (Interview, Muhammad Al-Ahari, June 15, 1995).

9) See a brief review of these analyses in Greil and Rudy (1984).

10) This motivational model is predominantly based on recruitment problems in social movements. It assumes that there are attempts 'to establish psycho-functional connections between the properties of social movements (usually construed as "appeals"). on the one

hand, and the social-psychological characteristics of potential or actual recruits (generally construed as motivational predispositions), on the other' (Zygmunt, 1972:451).

11) Glock initially sought to apply the deprivation model to explain the origin and evolution of religious groups. According to him, deprivation 'refers to any and all of the ways that an individual or group may be, or feel, disadvantaged in comparison either to other individuals or groups or to an internalized set of standards' (1964:27). He maintained that there are five types of deprivation, economic, social, organismic, ethical, and psychic, to 'which individuals or groups may be subject relative to others in society' (*ibid*). These types have been further elaborated in their co-authored work (Glock and Stark, 1965: 242-59).

12) Cited in Rochford (1985). I have not been able to see the original.

13) However, Richardson (1985) finds these deprivation elements too deterministic and does not place them in the components of his new activist approach. But Glock argues that deprivation, of all sorts, may have constituted conditions for conversion but 'is not, in itself, a sufficient' one (Glock and Stark, 1965:249).

CHAPTER V

Predisposing Factors and Demographic Variables of Old NOI Members in Elijah Muhammad's Era (1946-1975)

Recruitment and conversion to the NOI appear to be well described in the sociology of religion by the multivariate approach, which uses a variety of models. These include the well-known Lofland-Stark process model, activist models, organisational patterns, analysis of converts' accounts and social or faith networks. In addition to these approaches, the recruitment and conversion to a Black religio-nationalist movement, such as the NOI, requires the consideration of other specific factors. These include racial discrimination and frustration (Singer, 1979, 1988; Baer, 1984), socio-economic deprivation (Glock, 1964; Glock and Stark, 1965; Baer, 1978; Singer, 1988) and the importance of socio-cultural and economic contextual circumstances where a religious group has emerged.

5.1. Predisposing Elements of Recruitment: Elijah Muhammad's Leadership

Recruitment to the NOI forces us to consider a number of factors such as circumstantial, deprivational, racial and other social elements. It also requires us to look at recruitment tactics and techniques that have been used by the movement to entice AAs to join it. First and foremost, the official recruitment strategy of the NOI was 'to recruit the "Negro in the mud" into the movement' (Essien-Udom, 1970:182). For this purpose, the NOI's officials and rank and file members sought to recruit AAs through a variety of means. However, the NOI's recruitment grounds, strategies and networks have gradually developed and changed slightly and, over the years, new elements and methods have been introduced.

5.1.1. The Social Context and Demographic Conditions of the Recruitment Ground

An encounter with a social or religious movement can occur in a variety of ways and locations. For nationalist and ethno-religious movements, particular recruiting grounds and contexts are a matter of course. For the NOI, as such a movement, the Black neighbourhoods have always been one of their prominent recruitment grounds. Social, cultural and economic contextual aspects of recruitment grounds are very important factors for the rise and growth of a movement (Strauss, 1976; Balch and Taylor, 1977; Stark and Bainbridge, 1980, 1985). The Black neighbourhoods contained and accommodated various factors for the rise and development of Black Nationalist and religious organisations. Typical of any given Black neighbourhood were disillusionment, frustration, discrimination, alienation from mainstream society, deprivation and unemployment, urban destitution and rapid demographic changes as a consequence of mass Black migration from the rural South to the industrial North (Beynon, 1938; Sahib, 1951; Essien-Udom, 1970; Lincoln, 1973; Marable, 1985; Singer 1988). The social conditions and circumstances wherein the majority of Black migrants resided were ripe to erupt into a protest movement (Fauset, 1970). They were appropriate and fertile grounds for the rise of Black pseudo-religious cults.

These sources of strain and the resulting social discontent and sense of injustice were a driving force among a growing number of people to take 'collective protest action' against the dominant social order (Smelser, 1962). Consequently, these conditions helped to spark widespread Black rejection of established societal norms and values in order to elevate the attention paid to the ideas and agendas propagated by the Black nationalist and religious milieu.

It was in this social milieu of post-migration and social disruption that there appeared an explosion of small Black religious cults, each attempting to recruit newly arrived migrants to their folds. From the early 1930s to the late 1950s the NOI, as such a cult, recruited the majority of its members from Black migrants in the North. In Detroit in the late 1930s, Beynon noted that an overwhelming majority of his research samples were

recent migrants (Beynon, 1938:897). Later studies (Sahib, 1951; Howard, 1965; Essien-Udom, 1970) came to similar conclusions. Sahib's research on the NOI in the Chicago area, for example, discovered that all registered members of the movement (n=286), with the exception of one female member, came from plantation areas in the South (p. 99).

My findings on NOI members during Elijah Muhammad's period of leadership (1946-1975) are in line with these previous empirical studies on the NOI. However, from the early 1960s onwards the dominant migrant composition of membership began to change. Of the 104 respondents to my survey questionnaire, mostly conducted in the Chicago area and some other parts of the USA through the assistance of Muslim professionals it is interesting to note that 59 (over 56%) were migrants. But, this proportion varies if the historical period in question is separated into two groups (from 1946 early 1960s and the early 1960s to 1975). Prior to the early 1960s⁽¹⁾ the number of migrants joining the NOI in this period was 39 out of the 46 respondents (85%). This figures confirms earlier studies that maintain that the overwhelming majority of the NOI's early members were migrants (Beynon, 1938; Sahib, 1951; Essien-Udom, 1970). During the second period, however, from the early 1960s to 1975 the number of migrants decreased considerably; only 20 out of the 58 respondents (34%) being migrants. This decrease in migrants can be accounted for in two ways. Firstly, the NOI experienced a rapid organisational growth from the late 1950s onwards so that it was no longer confined to the Black ghettos of the northern industrial urban districts. The NOI's temples and other establishments were scattered in various parts of the USA, including the South and West (Essien-Udom, 1970; Lincoln, 1973). Secondly, from the early 1960s onwards the movement began to attract the Black middle classes and professionals who resided outside Black neighbourhoods, rather than only the Black lower classes and migrants.

The demographic and socio-spatial dimensions of the recruitment ground of a religious movement are also significant for the expansion of a group. Migration, for example, (see Bainbridge and Stark 1980; Rochford, 1982, 1985; Singer 1988, 1979) is a contributory

factor for the growth of other religious groups in the USA, the UC, the ISKCON, and the Black Hebrews respectively. This typical feature of Black neighbourhoods along with other contextual aspects, played a crucial role in the early years and development of the NOI, at least until the early 1960s. The movement provided a refuge and platform for those recent migrants to express their disenchantment and disillusionment with mainstream society.

Another factor, the racial composition of the neighbourhoods of members at the time they joined the NOI also supports the contextual importance for recruitment. As can be seen from Table 5.1, the majority (77%) of my respondents was living in predominantly Black neighbourhoods with only 21% living in mixed neighbourhoods. Among this group of 22 members, only 2 males and 3 females were resident before the early 1960s while the remaining 11 males and 6 females were living in mixed neighbourhoods after the 1960s. This slight increase shows upward social mobility compared to the early period. The contributions of the NOI's self-help and 'do for your' self-economic teachings to the social status and class of its members will be discussed later. However,

Table 5.1. Racial composition of the neighbourhoods of members at the time they joined the NOI (1946-1975)

	Male	Female	Total
a) Predominantly Black Neighbourhood	45	36	81
b) Mixed Racial/Ethnic Neighbourhood	13	9	22
c) Predominantly White Neighbourhood	0	1	1
Total	58	46	104

even in mixed neighbourhoods the residents were mostly Hispanics and other coloured people, not whites. There was only one female member who lived in a predominantly white neighbourhood and she stayed in that area because of adoption. Consider the following remarks made by two NOI members of the Elijah Muhammad era on the constraints of Black neighbourhoods. A male professional describes this tension.

it was not safe for our people to go to white neighbourhoods and they were not welcomed. In big cities, there were invisible and thick racial and color borders between towns and neighborhoods where our people would not dare to cross. Even in the late 1960s, in Chicago, there were some neighbourhoods Blacks were attacked by whites or stopped and brutally tortured by police (Interview #6, paraphrased).

A 63 year old dentist maintains that the racial composition of mixed neighbourhoods was not truly mixed.

In mixed neighbourhood, the majority was still our people, African Americans. Hispanics were in and out. Sometimes we lived side by side. No problem for that ... (Interview, Dr A. Salaam, 1995b, paraphrased).

Even in the 1990s these demographic aspects of Black neighbourhoods were noticeable. I depended heavily on public transport during my field research in Chicago and its surrounding towns when travelling to observe and participate in the religious services and social and cultural activities of Minister Farrakhan's NOI and Imam W. D. Mohammed's community. It was very easy for me to notice which neighbourhood I was heading to just by seeing the racial and colour composition of the passengers in the bus or train.

Although the Black neighbourhoods have remained an important recruitment ground for the NOI, from the early 1960s onwards new recruitment grounds, networks and strategies were adopted to disseminate its message, such as public rallies, speaking engagements, mass media and social and cultural programmes. These new methods of recruitment will be examined in Chapter VI, at length, under the heading of recruitment networks and strategies of the NOI.

5.1.2 Socio-Economic Deprivation and Frustration, and Racial Discrimination

Although some sociologists of religion who advocate the activist model of conversion, such as Richardson (1985), do not include deprivation in their model because of its deterministic nature, several social scientists (Aberle, 1962; Glock, 1964; Baer, 1978) have maintained that deprivation played an important role in the rise of religious movements, and recruitment and conversion to them. In the case of Black nationalist and ethno-religious movements, one of the most consistent factors contributing to Black individuals or collectivities joining them was the feeling of social and economical deprivation. Therefore, the concept of deprivation is helpful in understanding and

analysing recruitment to the NOI. These selective factors, to some extent, constitute the predisposing conditions of the Lofland-Stark's process model of conversion.

Glock (1964:27) defines deprivation as 'any and all the ways that an individual or group may be, or feel, disadvantaged in comparison either to other individuals or groups or to an internalized set of standards'. He delineates five types of deprivation that were believed to be operative in the recruitment of an individual or group, and the emergence of all religious or social movements: economic, social, organismic, ethical, and psychic. However, I am particularly interested in his delineation of the economic and social types of deprivation in so far as they seem to be directly relevant to my subject matter the NOI:

Economic deprivation has its source in the differential distribution of income in societies and in the limited access of some individuals to the necessities and luxuries of life.

Social deprivation is a derivative of the social propensity to value some attributes of individuals and groups more highly than others and to distribute social rewards such as prestige, power, status and opportunity for social participation (Glock, 1964:27).

Of course, it does not necessarily follow that every social group suffering from deprivation will join religious or social organisations to express its feelings and dissatisfactions. However, the situation of AAs who joined or participated in Black religio-nationalist and political movements appears to be notably different. The newly arrived migrants in the hostile and alien environment of the North, from the beginning of the twentieth century to the 1960s, confronted racial tension, social and economic frustration and deprivation. They felt and experienced, in Lofland-Stark's words a 'discrepancy between some imaginary, ideal state of affairs and the circumstances in which [they] saw themselves caught up' (Lofland and Stark, 1965:864). Undoubtedly, socio-economic deprivation played a very significant role in attracting AAs to unconventional Black religio-nationalist cults and movements.

The Swedish sociologist, Gunnar Myrdal (1962). closely observed the racial discrimination and social stratification of American society in the first half of the twentieth century. He was surprised when he saw a deep contradiction between the American creed, dreams and democratic ideals, and their actual practices and

regulations in the social system. He was puzzled by witnessing the discrimination against and the socio-economic conditions of AAs: high rates of poverty, unemployment, segregation, frustration and disillusionment. These deteriorating conditions, coupled with the effects of racism after mass migration, eventually generated considerable disappointment among Black Americans. The inequalities between the two races were greatly felt in the northern industrial cities, like Detroit and Chicago. Marable (1985) describes the circumstances of Blacks in Chicago, which was considered one of the most discriminatory urban settings in the USA. He points out that Blacks in Chicago

generally experienced rates of unemployment higher than the national average. During the early 1960s, a period of relatively high joblessness, white unemployment rates in Chicago were about 4 percent, while Blacks experienced jobless rates between 10 and 15 percents (1985:210-11).

Even in the early 1970s, the socio-economic disparities between Blacks and Whites were still quite high. Pinkney (1975) describes these imbalances indicating that

Black earnings are low regardless of where they are employed. At all occupational levels Blacks with comparable training and experience can expect to earn less than white workers. The effects of discrimination in employment are reflected in earnings between Black and white workers' (1975: 940).

Consequently, these socio-economic inequalities caused far-reaching rejection of established norms and led to an increase of attention being paid to the teachings and objectives propagated by Black Nationalist organisations. Baer and Singer (1992; Baer, 1984) regard the rise of Black politico-religious and nationalist movements as an angry response to discrimination, racism and social stratification which came out of AAs historical experience and, more importantly, the nature of their relations with the dominant white society and system.

The socio-economic unrest in the aftermath of the Great Depression paved the way for the Black masses to show great interest in Black cults and nationalist groups. This seems to suggest that the socio-economic deprivation of AAs was one important factor in their participation in and support of those groups. On the other hand, the majority of these movements tended to mobilise their supporters mainly from the socially and economically deprived, in Niebuhr's (1957) word, 'the disinherited' section of society.

This was actually the case with the NOI from its inception in the early 1930s to the early 1960s. It was, therefore, probably no mere coincidence that the NOI and its corresponding movements began emerging in the midst of the socio-economic uncertainties and unrest of the post-Great Depression period.

The early studies on the NOI (for example, Beynon (1938); Sahib (1951), noted that NOI members have been drawn exclusively from the economically, socially and educationally deprived Black lower classes. Those people's lives were filled with disappointments, frustrations and hardships, and they mostly worked in unskilled jobs. Nevertheless, from the late 1950s, although there had been no substantial change in the socio-economic status of the majority of its members, some improvements in terms of life style, behaviour and self-esteem were observed. Essien-Udom (1970:104), for instance, noticed that although NOI members were still lacking as regards to education and income levels, they displayed an inspiring middle-class character in their life styles. Finally, in his prolonged and continued interest and research on the NOI, Lincoln (1973) has carefully analysed the socio-economic changes of members and noticed a shift in the group's appeal, from largely lower working class to lower middle class Black people. He noted that,

Muslims are fully employed, yet they live and meet in the most deteriorated areas of the slums, but not exclusively. The 'Protestant Ethic' is not abandoned in Black Islam. The visible evidence of Muslim prosperity are increasingly noticeable in the best neighbourhoods occupied by middle-class Black Americans (1973:26).⁽²⁾

Concerning the changes and the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of NOI members under Elijah Muhammad's leadership, I have drawn similar conclusions to previous studies. However, my data on NOI members differs slightly from these earlier works. While they covered the pre-early 1960s of Elijah Muhammad's era, the data I have collected on NOI members embraces all his active leadership since he took formal control of the NOI in 1946. Although he assumed the leadership in 1934 he could not take full control of the NOI until 1946 because of early internal conflicts and a power struggle in the movement (see Chapter III). This is why my findings reflect the diverse experiences, tensions and frustrations of members depending on which decade or period they joined. The respondents gave different answers to the survey questionnaire

regarding the problems and tensions they were experiencing prior to joining the NOI. As can be seen from Table 5.2, a significant proportion of the respondents (43) expressed combined tensions and frustrations such as socio-economic, racial and religious. These frustrations reflect the general feelings of the Black masses and they also share the majority's dissatisfactions with the system. The rest of the respondents indicated single tensions: socio-economic, 28; racial, 13; and religious, 12. However, if the period they

Table 5.2. Problems / tensions experienced before joining the NOI (1946-1975)

	Prior to the early 1960s	From the early 1960s to 1975	Total
a) Religious	2	10	12
b) Socio-economic	16	12	28
c) Racial	8	5	13
d) Religious/Socio-economic/ Racial	20	23	43
e) None	0	8	8
Total	46	58	104

joined the NOI is taken into account the number of problems slightly changes. Those who joined before the early 1960s tended to point out single problems: socio-economic difficulties, 16 out of 28; issues relating to race, 8 out of 13; religious, 2. On the other hand, the majority of respondents who joined from the early 1960s onwards (23 out of 43) indicated combined problems, economic, racial and religious. It is no accident that this is the decade when civil rights groups organised marches to raise awareness of the Black masses' civil and socio-economic and political rights. It is interesting to note that there was a slight decrease in those citing socio-economic and racial problems, particularly in the late 1960s and the early 1970s: 12 out of 28, and 5 out of 13 respectively. In that period, however, an important development occurred in that the number of respondents who indicated religious problems increased 10 out of 12. The number of respondents who had combined problems in the two historical periods did not change radically if their number is taken into account. It is also interesting to see the low of number reported single racial problems in both periods. This suggests this was because of the large number of respondents living in Black neighbourhoods (see Table 5.1) who did not interact with the wider White society. Curiously enough, the very small

number of respondents who indicated that they were not experiencing any particular problem at all, 8 out of 104, all joined the group in the early 1970s.

The above data on AAs' socio-economic difficulties and racial frustration demonstrate that social and economic deprivation and racial discrimination were important factors, or at the least, one of the predisposing conditions for their recruitment to Black religious cults and religio-political and nationalist movements, such as the NOI. The following remarks were typical expressions of their individual and collective experiences. A retired 72 year old Muslim male, who took a ministerial role in the old NOI times, refers to the general socio-economic conditions of AAs,

In the early years of Islam [the NOI] in 30s, 40s especially before the late 50s, economic social hardships and conditions of the majority of our people were an important factor in their coming to the Nation. Our people were the most oppressed by and alienated from both white folks and Black middle class. But, by the late 1950s and especially in the 1960s we began seeing some of our professional folks around us (Interview #10, paraphrased).

A female Muslim pensioner, who is 81 years and spent most of her life as a home cleaner, tells of her personal experiences,

My parents were so poor like the majority of our people here. Before becoming a follower of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, all my life was uncertain, despair and failure. I was struggling to achieve basic things in my life. I was looking for a better way of life (Respondent # 55).

However, a 44 year old male, working at a local newspaper, points out the social and political realities of the past.

I had hard times all my life before Islam [NOI]. I was unemployed and depressed. I was disillusioned with the injustice system of this country [USA], segregation, discriminations on jobs (Respondent # 13).

Besides these accounts of socio-economic difficulties, the respondents were more interested in focusing on issues relating to frustration over their experiences of discrimination. For example, consider the following individual and collective testimonies of the members below. A 47 year old Imam at a local Masjid remembers questioning racism.

I was going through a big change in my life, I was trying to find myself, why was others over us [African American]. Why was Black so oppressed? At one point, I tried to hide myself among white folks! As a child in the Boy Scouts being called out of my name [Nigger] simply for walking down the street with my group (Respondent # 14).

A 48 year old Muslim professional criticises the daily realities of the past.

What do you think? Having been born and raised in the U.S.A., at an early age you realize the injustice and 'one-sidedness' of this culture (Respondent # 3).

An ex-Black Power active member recounts his past idealistic personal initiatives for Black people.

I belonged to SNCC. I did realize the need for our people to be released from the oppressive yoke of white domination (Respondent #25).

But a 56 year old housewife tells her own story of difficulties she had confronted in a court case and at the hospital.

at 14 when my sister was killed and the judge (white) let the killer go. Also, when my second baby was born we were the only Blacks in the hospital ward and were neglected (Respondent # 30).

However, a 52 year old university lecturer would rather point out unfair racial and socio-economic circumstances in the 1960s.

The 1960s were a period of great racial and socio-economic polarization. Having been born and raised in poor socio-economically oppressed parts of Harlem and South Bronx in N.Y.C., I always felt those frustrations. From day one racism in America has always posed a problem for non-pallid people. It is as American as apple pie (Respondent # 6).

The above accounts, of socio-economic deprivation, racial discrimination and frustration, appear to point out that these were very important preconditions for recruitment to the NOI. However, the necessity of deprivation and tension as predisposing conditions for conversion raises some questions. Several studies have found that the tensions converts feel are no different from those felt by non-converts (Seggar and Kunz, 1972; Austin, 1977; Balch and Taylor, 1977). Heirich (1977), for example, noted that many of those in his sample of the Catholic Pentecostal movement expressed a high level of tension, but this did not distinguish them significantly from non-Pentecostals. Beckford (1975a: 157) also found that social and economic deprivations were not essential factors in stimulating people to join the Jehovah's

Witnesses (JW). These studies seem to suggest that converts to these religious movements experienced no higher levels of tension than non-converts. Rather, they appear to maintain that reports of tension are not an important determining factor for recruitment.

This is not the case for Black religious and nationalist groups such as the NOI. The respondents' historical experiences and 'acutely-felt' and prolonged frustration, racial discrimination and socio-economic deprivation seem to be significant preconditions for their participation in and joining of the group. The primary appeal of the NOI, therefore, is probably its offer of restructuring Black collective socio-economic conditions and advocating identifiable common concerns of the Black masses.

5.1.3 Politico-Religious and Nationalistic Problem-Solving

Individual or collective problems can be dealt with through a number of alternatives. When conventional ways are not available to address their problems, people tend to seek unconventional, alternative solutions. Such was the case of the Black lower classes before the early 1970s.

Lofland and Stark suggest that 'an alternative solution is a perspective or rhetoric defining the nature and sources of problems in living and offering some program for their solution' (1965:867). They proposed three solutions for problems: psychiatric, political and religious. I am particularly interested in their delineation of the political and religious solutions, as they appear to be directly relevant to my subject matter.

Political solutions, mainly radical, locate the sources of the problems in the social structure and advocate reorganization of the system as a solution. The religious perspective tends to see both sources and solutions as emanating from an unseen and, in principle, unseeable realm (Lofland and Stark, 1965:867).

Maintaining that these problem-solving perspectives were preconditions for recruitment, Lofland and Stark tried to hypothesise a causal linkage between the prospective convert's previous ideological and religious inclination or socialisation and his/her preference for the philosophy and objectives of a particular movement. To test this

hypothesis a number of studies argued that preparticipation, and religious and political congruencies were contingent elements for recruitment (Gordon, 1974; Greil, 1977; Richardson and Stewart, 1977; Richardson *et al*, 1978). Richardson and his associates, for example, found that predispositions are an important factor for conversion to the Jesus Movement. Yet Snow and Phillips' (1980) findings on the members of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism are quite different. They contend that their data 'provide little support for the corollary proposition that the possession of a religious problem-solving perspective is a necessary precondition for conversion to a religious cult or movement' (1980:436).

My findings, however, offer substantial evidence in support of the Lofland - Stark hypothesis. Previous participation and engagement of members in Black religious and nationalist movements made them more susceptible to joining the NOI. In order to solve their problems and frustrations, and also to protect their basic rights, the majority of AAs, mostly lower class, were sometimes actively involved in and sometimes emotionally supported by or sympathised with unconventional Black Nationalist and religio-political organisations. Fauset has described the position of the Black masses: 'Black Americans' high religious participation was, in part, the result of the lack of other channels open to them'. He further argued that Black religious cults and nationalist organisations provided them with the chance to participate 'in an atmosphere free from embarrassment or apology, a place where they may experiment in activities such as business, politics, social reform and social expression' (Fauset, 1970:107-8). To offer alternative perspectives and solutions to the Black masses' social and structural problems and position in the dominant White society, a number of unconventional Black organisations adopted a wide range of strategies, socio-economic, political, nationalist and religious. However, regardless of the specific form they take or their emphases, Black religio-nationalist movements exhibit a common theme, namely, the element of protest against the racially and socio-economically polarised and stratified structure of American society. AAs are, therefore, very familiar with the existence and the activities of a number of Black religious cults, nationalist or protest movements,

either through their prior religious and political experiences or through acquaintance with these organisations in the Black ghettos.

Sahib found that the majority of the NOI's members in the early 1950s in Chicago were involved in 'various Black religious cults, protest organisations, and repatriation movements for a long time before their participation in the Asiatic cult [the NOI]' (1951:104). Later, Essien-Udom's work (1970) disclosed similar results. Howard's (1965) findings also showed that a majority of his samples were already nationalistically and racially motivated prior to joining the NOI. My findings not only show the ideological mobility of the NOI's members in their problem-solving attempts, but they also elucidate the ways in which its attraction and appeal to AAs has changed over the decades, due to its objectives, growth and decay, and sometimes internal conflicts and

Table 5.3. Members' involvement in Black Nationalist, political and socio-cultural organisations before joining the NOI (1946-1975)

	Prior to the early 1960s		From the early 1960s to 1975		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
a) Masonry	2	3	0	0	5
b) Garvey Movement (UNIA)	8	4	0	0	12
c) Repatriation Movements (to Africa, Ethiopia, Liberia and Ethiopia Peace movement)	6	3	0	0	9
d) Other Marginal Black Movements (God's Government on the Earth, Black Jews, Israelite, The Elks, the Night Phythiens)	3	2	0	0	5
e) Black Power Movements (Student Non-violent Cordination Comittee, Black Panther and United Slaves)	0	0	12	7	19
f) Conventional Civil Rights Organisations (NAACP, CORE, Urban League and SCLC)	1	2	5	4	12
g) Black Student Associations (e.g. Zeta Phi Beta, Sorority, Fraternity, Black Scouts, etc.)	1	0	7	4	12
h) Not member, but supported / had sympathy with the Black Nationalist ideology	3	4	6	6	19
g) None	1	3	3	4	11

power struggles. As is shown in Table 5.3, a large number of my respondents sometimes actively participated in and sometimes emotionally supported Black protest, nationalist movements and socio-cultural associations. However, the rate of involvement and affiliation differs from one organisation to another. It also varies according to the decade in which the movements arose and the form and policy they took. 31 respondents out of 46 who joined prior to the early 1960s, indicated that they were involved in and participated in Black protest, repatriation and nationalist organisations such as the Garvey Movement, Masonry, repatriation movements to Africa and Liberia, the Peace movement of Ethiopia etc. Seven respondents out of 46 did not participate in these movements but supported their causes and agendas. When these two responses are added together, 38 out of 46 respondents (82% of those joining before the early 1960s) were conscious and familiar with race issues and nationalistic ideology prior to joining the NOI (Sahib, 1951; Essien-Udom, 1970). Even more interesting was the finding that conventional Black civil rights organisations such as the NAACP, the CORE, and the Urban League, did not attract the Black masses; only 3 members out of my respondents during this period had some sort of loose associations with them.

From the participants' accounts it seems that they strongly repudiate conventional Black civil rights organisations. They regard them as a kind of upper class club. For example, a 76 year old retired male respondent, who was involved in odd jobs prior to his joining the NOI, criticises the distance of these organisations from rank-and-file Black people,

I never belonged to the NAACP. Their programs never attracted me. These folks were in a different world (Respondent # 59).

The interesting comments that follow came from a 57 year old male who owns a clothes shop. Despite having a small business and being socio-economically better off, he harshly criticised the stance of conventional civil rights groups.

I was never a member of the NAACP. Its purpose and programs were bettering the conditions of our people here, but it never worked for it. They were just interested in one class of people. They did not help the great majority of our people (Respondent # 64).

A 51 year old ex-Black Power (SNCC) active member, who works as a freelance journalist, focused on the conventional organisations' soft policies.

I was never part of these organizations, the NAACP and CORE. They were not militant enough to offer better solutions to the great masses of Black people. Besides they were proposing to get integration with the devil, white man. We never received better treatment from these folks, white men (Respondent # 72).

The other intriguing finding is that of those who were involved in and supported unconventional Black organisations, a significant number of the NOI's members (26) participated in more than one movement and sometimes supported and socialised in several movements at the same time. Such mobility in their affiliation can be accounted for in that they were what Sahib (1951) described as 'mobile seekers', searching for alternatives and solutions to their conditions. According to Richardson and Stewart (1977), AAs with 'felt difficulties' were following certain 'conversion careers', shifting 'from one alternative to another within a given basic perspective before trying another general orientation' (1977:825). Richardson and Stewart's notion of 'serial alternatives' is also very relevant in explaining AAs' mobile affiliations; one has to take into account multievent conversion elements, not solely religious but also race consciousness, nationalistic and political as well.

While the earlier unconventional Black organisations, shown in Table 5.3, faded away by the early 1960s because of internal conflicts, power struggles, schisms and lack of attraction to the Black masses (Essien-Udom, 1970), in the second period, from the early 1960s to 1975, others arose from of their ashes. These new movements were mostly various Black Power movements and Black students' socio-cultural associations at colleges and universities. The former sought revolutionary struggle to liberate Black people with its own social reform, economic and political programmes which were inspired by Malcolm X's writings and speeches.⁽³⁾ The latter were not as radical and revolutionary as the former, but they were still organised around racial and cultural pride and identity. For this later period (1960 to 1975), 19 respondents out of 58 (almost 32%) indicated that they were influenced by the Black Power movements' teachings, and programmes, and some actively or loosely participated in their activities. Eleven informants were affiliated with Black students' associations while they were at college, such as Zeta Phi Beta, Black Sororities and Fraternities and 12 respondents stated that they supported Black organisations' causes without openly indicating their affiliation to

any specific one, revolutionary, conventional or cultural. Those who supported this movement, 40 out of 58 (69%) were, one way or another, already aroused and motivated by the ideology of race consciousness, self-pride and identity prior to joining the NOI. A 55 year old Muslim prison instructor indicates that he was deeply influenced by Black Power ideology prior to joining the NOI.

What happened was that I was looking, searching. I've got involved with some Brothers who were in the Nation once but come out you know. I was out there with Brothers for years, that's called the Revolutionary Action Movement. It was something like the Black Panther Movement. I stayed for years with those Brothers and but with Grace of Allah, I went back to the Nation (Interview, Imam Murad B. Deen, 1997, verbatim).

Another Muslim male's comments also reflect his previous nationalistic sentiments.

Many of my friends and myself all were thinking nationalistic, Black nationalism. We're already in that frame of mind, nationalistic and political awareness of Black people (Respondent # 1).

However, the most noticeable outcome from Table 5.3 is that there was an increase, from 3 to 9 (15%) in the number of respondents who were Black professionals and involved in conventional Black or civil rights organisations. The low degree of affiliation with civil rights groups might have been the result of the Black masses' discontent with their ineffective stance, compromising and unpromising policies. The NOI's views might have increased their dissatisfaction with civil rights groups. Elijah Muhammad, for example, severely attacked these organisations' passive agendas and resistance, arguing that,

Here, we have the NAACP, CORE and various other organizations before our eyes, who attempt to try achieving their aims of asking for freedom, justice and equality with the slave masters' children without weapons, without anything harmful. They lie down at the feet of the vicious, weakened, human-like beast only to be kicked and stamped upon and have dogs sicked upon them to rip their flesh apart ... (E. Muhammad, 1965:214).

In addition to the above information, I asked a further question in the survey questionnaire in order to expose more of their attitudes towards civil rights groups: for example, 'What did you think about the policies of civil rights groups?' (see Table 5.4) More than half of the respondents (57%) denounced the policies and programmes of civil right groups. The strong opposition to and rejection of the policies and stance of the civil rights groups have remained the same, that is, fairly high for both time periods (see Table 5.4). However, the number of respondents who preferred not to make any

comment on the groups (18%) decreased from 12 prior to the early 1960s to 7 following 1960 (11% to 6%). These figures reveal that nearly one fifth of the NOI members in my survey were alienated from and had totally lost contact with conventional Black organisations. When the above two results are considered together, that is, both those who strongly opposed civil rights groups and those who preferred to abstain from commenting on them, their number remarkably increases to 79. This means that almost 76% of all respondents were disenchanted with societal values. As can be seen from Table 5.4, only 24% of the total respondents either made mixed remarks, were ambivalent or supported civil rights groups. However when this group was analysed by time period there was a marked difference in their responses. Only 4 of the pre 1960s group (3%) made mixed remarks or approved, whereas 21 of the post early 1960s group (20%) fell in this category. This difference seems to reflect the fact that the NOI began to patch up its differences with other conventional Black organisations. It also hinted

Table 5.4. What did you think about the policies of Civil Rights groups? (1946-1975)

	From 1946 to the early 1960s	From the early 1960s to 1975	Total
a) No idea; no comments; I was never a part of civil rights groups	12	7	19
b) Disapprove	30	30	60
c) Mixed remarks; ambivalent	3	15	18
d) Approve; support	1	6	7
Total	46	58	104

that the group was moving from the periphery to the centre and indicated signs of accommodation (Parenti, 1964) which may have been instrumental in changing people's attitudes. Initially the changes in the policies of the NOI were sources of schism and polarisation (see Chapter III).

Overall, the majority of my respondents from the NOI and the Black people in the street remained distant towards the civil rights groups (Lincoln, 1973). The following

randomly selected accounts illustrate more fully the respondents' attitudes towards these groups. A 55 year old Imam's criticisms focus on the passive policies and resistance of civil rights groups.

Well, basically, we felt about that it was a waste of time, you know. Because we felt that they [civil rights groups] did not really know the enemy that they were dealing with. And that's been proven many times. And also to see racists have attacked our people with dogs, rods and .how do they allow themselves to be abused? We could not agree with that kind of stuff. You're victim, why he's persecuted, tortured, and suffered. And we've become bigger victims. But people who had no more conscious, and it did not mean, you could not appeal to their humanity because they did not possess any. I think, because of the Nation and different Black Nationalist movements there was a spin of the Nation. It was a waste of time to beg white folks. Because a lot of innocent people were hurt and killed (Interview, Imam Murad B. Deen, 1999, verbatim).

The comments of a 55 year old university lecturer remind one of the NOI's popular propaganda motto,

Said movement sought freedom, justice, equality in America-not integration per se. Ditto, the NOI (Respondent # 4).

A taxi driver's criticism specifically refers to the policies and stance of a famous leader of civil rights.

It did not appeal to me at all. I did not like it. I did not like that turn your other cheek philosophy. The marching I've never like it that marching and turn your other cheek. And Dr King's philosophy, it was not for me at all. It was a waste of time. We could do better on our own (Respondent # 26).

But some respondents make mixed remarks. Here are some examples. A Muslim professional, an accountant who supported civil rights groups, hoped to change the common destiny of Black people.

I supported civil rights. But I knew this would break the back of racism (Respondent # 12).

Nevertheless, two professional female Muslims' comments give a balanced treatment of the civil rights movement.

It seemed to be heading in the right direction in some areas. In some areas we did not benefit at all ... (Respondent # 15).

They [civil rights groups] did a lot to help us-overcoming laws of discrimination based on race. They also backlashed on us by taking away the drive for self-sufficiency ... (Respondent # 5)

The above individual and collective expressions of social discontentment claimed that, as Turner and Killian argue, 'some established practice or mode of thought is wrong and

ought to be replaced' (1972:259) in mainstream American society. The Black Nationalist movements and the NOI in particular, strongly rejected the philosophy and policies of civil rights groups. They claimed that these policies were not helping and were not in the best interests of Black people, because civil rights groups were too soft, ineffective and were not promising to change the unfortunate destiny of the Black masses. They even labelled those who advocated passive resistance and objectives as 'Uncle Tom'.⁽⁴⁾

This dissatisfaction constrained them to affiliate with or support unconventional Black organisations, which were very common and popular in the Black ghettos. Consequently, the majority of my respondents in both periods, had remained distant from and critical of civil rights groups. Above all, they were distrustful of the state-backed conventional organisations, assuming that the Black struggle would be monitored and controlled by governmental institutions. More importantly, a large number of unconventional Black organisations, and the NOI in particular, presumed that Christianity, the White man's religion, lay behind the social, political and economic oppression of Black people (E. Muhammad, 1965, 1974). Therefore, in their recruitment strategies and sometimes to estrange deliberately already disenchanted people from the values and traditions of mainstream society, the NOI directed its criticism at Christianity and its contradictory practices towards the Black race ever since the days of slavery.

However, to offer alternatives to the dominant religion of society, a significant number of Black religio-nationalist and repatriation movements relied on different religious traditions, such as Judaism (Singer, 1979, 1988) and Islam (Essien-Udom, 1970; Fauset, 1970; Lincoln, 1973; Wilson, 1989),⁽⁵⁾ to give a religious meaning and metaphysical basis to their teachings, programmes and missions. This is the next issue that will be discussed. My respondents' religious affiliations and their religiosity prior to joining the NOI will be analysed later in this chapter.

5.1.4 Religious Disillusionment and Seekership

It is possible to see similarities in the Black masses' attitude to conventional religious bodies, sects, denominations and organisations. Once they realised that conventional religious institutions were insufficient to provide tangible solutions to their existing problems, then they tended to seek unconventional alternatives and sometimes totally abandoned their attachments to the religion they used to belong to.

Lofland and Stark postulated that 'religious seekership' was a necessary precondition for conversion. Confining the problem-solving perspective to the religious aspect, initially they maintained that prospective recruits found 'conventional religious institutions inadequate as a source of solution'; then he/she comes 'to define himself as a religious seeker', as a 'person searching for some satisfactory system of religious meaning to interpret and resolve his discontent' (1965:868). But critically Lofland later, revised this predisposing condition, suggesting that 'its narrow form, became far less than universal. People not previously religious at all have joined in noticeable numbers' (Lofland, 1977:815). This was confirmed by a significant number of my informants. They were not in the literal sense, as Lincoln noted (1973:29), religious seekers. Rather they used religion as an alternative to foster and strengthen their race consciousness, identity and unity.

In the early 1950s, Sahib found that the majority of the NOI's members in Chicago 'had no interest in the Church at all. Some of them even pretend that they do not know their denominations before joining the Asiatic Cult [NOI]' (1951:103). He added further that 'each of them had a great doubt about the significance of the church in his life. All of them were sceptical about the knowledge and character of the churchmen' (1951:103-4). By the end of the same decade, Essien-Udom (1970:92-101) also noted the NOI's members' disillusionment with their previous religious affiliations.⁽⁶⁾

Dissatisfaction focuses on particular personal and collective problems and experiences, either recent or accumulated over the years. For AAs, their dissatisfaction usually

derived from their historical experiences, slavery, segregation, discrimination and socio-economic inequalities and constraints. They mostly questioned the role and position of religion in the difficulties they had experienced.

Myrdal contrasted the position of the Black church both in the South and the North in the aftermath of the Civil War. He argued that although the Black church in the North displayed a more independent stance, in the South it has continued 'the same role as it did before the Civil War ... under the pressure of political reaction' (1962:861). There is general agreement that the Black church for the most part was ineffective and remained passive in regard to the Black people's historical experiences and difficulties from the end of slavery to the 1950s⁽⁷⁾. Myrdal added that 'on the whole even the Northern Negro church has remained a conservative institution with its interest directly upon other-worldly matters and has largely ignored the practical problems of the Negro's fate in this world' (1962:853).

The common stereotype of Blacks was that they were religious' and 'over-churched people' in comparison with Whites. Although not generally accepted, there was a contention among some scholars that because of their high religiosity religion functioned as a mechanism for the social control of Blacks (May and Nicholson, 1933; Simpson and Yinger, 1958; Drake and Clayton, 1962). Here, religion is defined in the classical Marxist perspective as the 'opium of the people'.⁽⁸⁾ The Black rank-and-file felt that the Black church, that is, Christianity itself, has been used as a means of controlling them, making them passive and then directing their attentions to other-worldly matters, rather than to finding solutions to the existential, social, political and economic problems they confront in this world.

A significant number of unconventional Black religious and nationalist groups in the twentieth century increased their attacks on the paradoxical and contradictory themes and practices of Christianity as preached by the dominant White society (Lincoln, 1973; Baer, 1984; Baer and Singer, 1992). The NOI, perhaps more than others, used strong anti-Christian rhetoric and attacked the conflicting beliefs and practices of Christianity,

repudiating it as 'the white man's religion' and calling the Bible a 'poison book' (E. Muhammad, 1965). Elijah Muhammad made countless criticisms, for example:

The so-called American Negroes have been gravely deceived by the white man's Christianity and Bible (1965:81).

The false Christian religion is for the White race and not for the Black nation. Islam is our religion. Islam is a religion of divine power and will give power to the helpless so-called Negroes to overcome the devils and their false religion, Christianity. It has never helped the so-called Negroes against the white Christian's brutality' (1974:86).

Elijah Muhammad continued:

White Christianity has robbed and destroyed our peace and love for one another. It was white Christians who brought our fathers into slavery; it is white Christianity that is keeping you a subject people ... (1974: 189).

In fact, the harsh criticism of Christianity was used as a successful recruitment tactic which addressed those who were already dissatisfied with the Black Church. They were 'disillusioned by the continuation of racial segregation in the church and are coming to identify the church with social apathy and racial subordination' (Lincoln, 1973:30). With their disillusionments and 'felt difficulties' they set off seeking 'new trips, persons and ideas' (Straus, 1976:254) or 'serial alternatives' (Richardson and Stewart, 1977; Richardson, 1980), whether religious and 'metaphysical' (Balch and Taylor, 1977) or political and nationalist in nature. In the Black 'social milieu' a variety of Black religious cults and nationalist groups' 'assumptions make sense' (Balch and Taylor, 1977) and help them resolve their perceived problems. Using this perspective, it is possible to describe the respondents in my survey as 'seekers'. To the survey question, 'What was happening in your life in terms of religion at the time you joined the NOI?', a large number of my respondents, 81 out of 104 (78%), openly expressed their confusion and dissatisfaction with the practices and symbols of the religion to which they used to belong; it was Christianity generally, and in particular, a variety of Protestant sects. The emphasis was mostly on the deeds and practices of white Christians in the name of religion. Of these 81 respondents, 60 were 'mobile seekers' (Sahib, 1951) searching for truth, more satisfying beliefs and better understanding of religion and God by changing their affiliation from one Black religious cult or nationalist movement to another. But their seeking was not always and necessarily religious. As already discussed in the

previous section, they were also seeking more satisfying nationalist and political beliefs. Thirty-nine of the 60 informants joined prior to the early 1960s, and 21 joined in the later period of the Elijah Muhammad's leadership. Of interest is the fact that 14 of the 104 respondents (13%) indicated that they did not believe in church and had already lost their interest in religion, again referring to personal or collective dissatisfaction and the contradictory practices of the Church. The remaining 7 respondents (6%) pointed out that they had not experienced any problems and were having 'a good time'. The accounts of respondents below further explain their religious disillusionment and seekership. An Imam who works as a prison chaplain made some interesting remarks about his long search for faith and ideology.

What happened was that I was looking, searching, you know. I was really not interested in Christianity. I studied Buddhism, a bit searched Hinduism. Then they couldn't answer, they didn't answer my questions. Then I've got involved with some brothers who were in the Nation. They were selling *Muhammad Speaks* newspaper right around corners of the neighborhood. I got involved with Marxism, you know. I was out there with brothers for years, that's called the Revolutionary Action Movement. And it was something like the Black Panthers ... I stayed for years with those brothers. And but with Grace of Allah, I went back to the Nation ... Before that let me tell you my religious background. I was grown up as Baptist. From the time I was a baby, you know, I was Christian, baptised. I went through all things. But around the time when I reached 14 years old, I started questioning certain things, then I asked the Baptist Minister questions about God, Jesus, Trinity and so on. And Minister told me, I shouldn't question God. When he told me that, they don't need to increase my curiosity ... But let me tell you something, let me give you my background. My grandfather and grandmother were in the Moorish Science Temple (MST). They started teaching me when I was a teenager, I guess at age of 12. My grandfather took me to the MST meetings and he tried to instil that in me ... So what happened was that my mind was impregnated with Allah, from early days ... And I see this is, Allah bringing me in particular direction (Interview, Imam Murad B. Deen, 1997, verbatim).

A 63 year old dentist's comments centre on the controversial practices and symbols of religion.

In the early years of my life, the church I went to was the Methodist Church. My parents were from the South, so you're going to church until you'll be able to make decision by your own. But when I reached about 18 or 19 year old, I began questioning symbols, images and certain beliefs in church. I was the only a Black student at faculty ... Anyway, I can still remember there was a huge picture of Jesus on the right hand wall of the entrance to the church saying 'Our Lord Savior Jesus Christ'. Of course, he looked like a Caucasian. And the paradox was that we couldn't go to the Caucasian church right around the corner. But our Lord Savior was Caucasian. This Lord has got a church for us and he has also got a church for other folks. There was no relation between them at all. And we didn't know what they're talking about our church ... And we know we've been asking to be free for long time. And we're able to do things by our own. And we got to look up to him [Caucasian God] to do it whatever time you turn around. We can still read somewhere that folks [whites] looking like him hanging us, beating us and that has carried on. So when white folks come along and start asking you, hey, I've got an image in the Bible and church, and you have no images before me. When you question these things, they think I confuse the icons and images ... So I was in that dichotomy. The dichotomy is how we're

treated, how we're brought up in America, who brought us here, what our experiences were here. And the religion of those people [whites] who definitely divided us ... Although it has been achieved some degree of integration in churches by now, but during the most segregated times Sunday mornings, there was a strict color line of religion, white folks were in their church, our people flocked into Black churches. By and large, that kind of dichotomy is what made people stopped thinking when it's brought to their attention by those were the teachings and doctrines of the Hon. Elijah Muhammad. There was no doubt that his teachings had powerful effects on our people ... (Interview, Dr A. Salaam, 1995a, verbatim).

A produce manager describes his personal dissatisfaction with a denomination in which he was brought up.

I was a Catholic. Raised in the Catholic family I went through all things, baptism, Catholic school. Then I became a very devout Catholic. When I saw the conditions of my people here, I became very skeptical of religious issues. And very dissatisfied about religion I used to belong. I was looking for truth, a better understanding of God. Religious misunderstandings you know. Segregation and discrimination on jobs and other things ... (Respondent # 31).

Some members focused more on their 'trips' and 'serial alternatives' in search of more satisfying beliefs and programmes rather than commenting on their personal and collective confusion and disillusionment. A technician who was an enthusiastic supporter of Black Power talks about his religious seeking which was influenced by his ideals.

I was brought up in the Catholic Church. The biggest part of my life up to the time I came into the Nation I remained as a Catholic. However, when I became more involved in Black issues I switched to Presbyterian (Respondent # 69).

A 70 year old female pensioner, who described her work as doing odd jobs before joining the NOI, gives more details about her background which reflects her religious-nationalist sentiments.

My parents were Masons. We believed in a higher power, and did not believe in organized church. At the age of 26, I joined to the Black Jews, the Wisdom House of Judah. I was a Black Jew, a Nubian. I remained in that organization until the age of 30. Then I found the Nation's teachings and programs were more in interest of our people. So I joined the Nation, Allahu Akbar. (Respondent # 17).

A university lecturer's journey is no different from that of others. He had already converted to a Sunni Muslim group but the NOI's charismatic leaders, such as Malcolm X, and their rhetoric influenced his decision to join the movement.

Prior to age 17, I was a Christian Baptist. At age of 17, I joined a Sunni Muslim group called the Muslim Brotherhood and took the Shahadah. I remained in the group until to age 19 in 1959. Malcolm X impressed us to the point of joining the NOI in 1959 (Respondent # 4).

As well as describing his religious trips, a male professional also mentions a specific event that influenced his decision.

I was in the process of spiritual growth and transformation. I was in the Moorish Science Temple. I was searching truth and better understanding of Allah. I joined various Sunni Muslim groups. But in 1953, Emmett Till ⁽⁹⁾ was killed in a very brutal manner by racist dogs. Then the realization of how the devil works and the history of our people here, these things convinced me to join the Nation to help and uplift our people ... (Respondent # 12).

The above accounts from respondents reveal that besides their religious seeking, their previous religio-nationalist views played a role or, at the least, influenced their joining the NOI. They were not totally unfamiliar with the journey they were heading for. However, a significant number of the informants (14: 13%) reported that they had abandoned completely the religion they used to belong to. However, respondents' dissatisfactions focus not only on the practices of adherents, the images and symbols, but also on the beliefs and the religion itself. For instance, a 58 year old who was involved in odd jobs prior to his recruitment to the NOI and now works for a security and patrolling company, talks about his dissatisfactions, targeting the priorities of religion.

I left Christianity. I never went to church after getting out of the correctional center. I never believed in God. Because I have been convinced that Christianity was not in the interest of our people. It taught us that salvation would be in the hereafter, but our folks needed salvation in this life, here. So I thought the biggest thing holding back our people was Christianity (Respondent # 63).

A 54 year old educator's disillusionment increased when he saw the inconsistency between the text and the practice after reading religious literature.

In the early 1960s when I saw brutalities in the South against our people I was deeply disturbed and confused by the incidents. It was, of course, not a Christian thing. Then I began studying religion very seriously. The more I studied religions the more I became disillusioned with church. I saw a lot of inconsistencies in Christian beliefs and practices ... (Respondent # 10).

A female cashier's account also refers to inconsistencies in religion.

I was never a member of a church. I just went to church, as a kid. At the time, I no longer believed in things the Baptist Church stood for. Because there were a lot confusions in church what it was taught and what was it was practised...(Respondent # 95).

As can be seen from the above accounts, the members quite often relate their dissatisfactions and criticism of religion to individual and collective historical

experiences, namely, slavery, segregation, discrimination and socio-economic difficulties. Having expressed their disillusionment with religion, they focus more on its practices and the symbols used by its adherents rather than on the core of religion itself. They associate the contradictory practices and beliefs of white Christians in positions of power within religion and the church. They particularly criticise the indifference of the church towards the abuses they face. On the other hand, the AAs' seeking of an alternative religious tradition was not necessarily 'spiritual'. Rather, it was to give a metaphysical foundation to their assertions, race consciousness, nationalist sentiments and quest for identity. In short, Blacks' historical experiences with a given reality seem to play a key role in sowing doubts about the established society's moral and religious values. Their distrust of the system was conducive to their seeking a 'competitor' (Heirich, 1977) religious tradition such as Islam or Judaism, to the dominant religion of society, Christianity (Baer and Singer, 1992).

While some sociologists of religion have contended that the predisposing conditions are not necessarily essential factors for understanding the conversion process (Austin, 1977; Snow and Phillips, 1980), a number of sociologists (Gordon, 1974; Greil, 1977; Heirich, 1977; Richardson and Stewart, 1977; Richardson *et al.* 1978) have rejected that argument. Richardson *et al.* (1978) found that the prospective convert's previous cognitive dispositions and political and religious tendencies have a significant impact in his/her decision to accept the ideology of a particular movement. In his sample of Catholic Pentecostals, Heirich, for example, disclosed a causal linkage between the adherents' prior experiences and their choice of religious group. He maintained that 'the new reality used by converts should speak directly to the problem they encountered and should explain it more successfully than its earlier competitor' (1977:675). Similarly, Greil argued that the seeking for a new perspective is accompanied by the prospective convert's 'stock of knowledge' and 'cognitive style' (1977:120-1). This type of analysis seems very appropriate in my study of NOI members for, as was delineated above, predisposing conditions were operative in their recruitment process to the movement.

The Lofland-Stark model's predisposing characteristics overlook the fact that organisations participate in the recruitment process. Snow and Phillips contend that the model ignores the role of movements 'as important agitational, problem defining, need-arousal and motive-producing agencies' (1980:437). In fact, the NOI probably marketed itself as the most powerful Black religio-nationalist or political movement with a well-defined set of bold goals, teachings and programmes which were extremely critical of White society and its establishments, social, cultural, moral and religious values. Its teachings and agendas focused on pro-Black issues and problems. As a matter of fact, the NOI's organisational structures and ideological functions played a crucial role in attracting the Black masses to the movement. On the one hand, the NOI disparaged the nature of the White man and his deeds, his government's policies on Blacks since slavery, and his paradoxical practice of religion. On the other hand, it boosted the Black people's quest for knowledge of self and identity, and taught existential patterns of their history, civilisation, religion, origin and nature as divine and as God's chosen people (E. Muhammad, 1957a, 1957b; 1965, 1973, 1974). The organisational function of conversion to the NOI will be examined at length in Chapter VI. Before moving on though, it would be helpful to analyse the demographic social variables of my respondents of the NOI (1946-1975) in Elijah Muhammad's era: age, gender, educational level, social and occupational status, and religious affiliations prior to conversion to the group.

5.2. Demographic Variables of the NOI's Members

As a sociological variable, demographic elements are significant indicators of the social class that a social or religious group attracts, appeals to and eventually recruits into its fold. There is a close relation between certain kinds of religious beliefs and the particular social status of people. This correlation has long been of great interest to sociologists of religion. They have studied the importance of social stratification as a demographic variable demarcating the mode of religious expressions and stressed the pertinence of social class as a determinant phenomenon. In different ways, then, the correlation between social stratification and religion has been used to interpret social

conduct, processes and structures (Beckford, 1975a:134). Consequently, it can serve to explain the reasons why a particular social class and demographic traits are likely to generate specific patterns of behaviour, and accept the ideology of a particular group.

5.2.1. Age Distribution

The age distribution is essential for understanding which age group a movement appeals to and most attracts. It is also one of the best-known variables of membership in the new religious movements (NRMs). Although religious conversion may occur at any stage of the human life cycle, the majority of studies on recruitment and conversion to NRMs or cults show that recruits generally fall into two age categories, the late teens or between the early 20s and 30s (Beckford, 1983, 1985). Galanter (1980:1577) and Barker (1984:206), for example, found that the average age of recruits joining the Unification Church (UC) was 21 and 23 years respectively.

However, this is not the case with conversion to Islam. The average age category of conversion to Islam in general, and to both conventional and unconventional Islamic movements in particular, differs from the NRMs. In fact, conversion to Islam is an early-middle age phenomenon. In his study of British Muslim converts, Kose found that 'the average conversion is 29.7, ranging from 15 to 61 with the vast majority falling into 23-45 years age group' (1996:47). Similarly, Poston's research revealed more or less the same age category for convert Muslims in the USA, with a mean age of 31 years (1992:166).⁽¹⁰⁾

During Elijah Muhammad's leadership of the NOI the average age of its converts varied depending on a which period in the historical development of the movement they joined. Sahib's study, for example, found that a large number of his sample of the NOI members, who joined in the early period converted when they were middle-aged or elderly (1951:108). However, the age composition of the group's membership began gradually to change from the late 1950s onwards, the largely elderly and middle-aged members being replaced by younger converts (Essien-Udom, 1970; Lincoln, 1973). In

his long-term study of the NOI Lincoln has remarked on the young age of its members. He explained that ‘up to 80 percent of a typical congregation is between the ages of seventeen and thirty-five. This pattern has been noted again and again in temples across the country’ (1973:24).

My findings show both the age distribution of members and how the age composition of the membership has changed over the years. More importantly, they reflect how the movement’s internal problems have influenced the rise and fall of membership and how unconventional Black Nationalist and religious movements have attracted particular age groups. The data reported in Table 5.5 indicate that the overwhelming majority of my sample of the NOI members (85) joined the movement between the ages of 16 and 35 years. This study draws parallel conclusions with the findings of Lincoln’s (1973) and

Table 5.5. Age distribution at the time of joining the NOI (1946-1975)

	Prior to the mid 1950s	From the mid 1950s to the mid-1960s	In the mid- 1960s	From the mid- 1960s to 1975	Total
a) Teenagers	2	3	0	6	11
b) 20-25 years	2	14	0	19	35
c) 26-30 years	2	9	1	12	24
d) 31-35 years	3	6	1	5	15
e) 36-40 years	4	2	0	1	7
f) 41- 45 years	4	1	0	0	5
g) 46 and over	4	2	0	1	7

Howard’s (1965) studies. This age group is very relevant where Black Nationalist and religio-nationalist movements are concerned. Both conventional and unconventional Black religio-nationalist and political ideologies and programmes appealed mainly to this age category. Moreover, as was discussed earlier, the above age distribution of my respondents shows that Blacks who are the most disillusioned and alienated from mainstream societal values fell into this age category (Singer, 1979, 1988). Further, they had stronger nationalistic and militant leanings as well (Marx, 1969).

As the movement's historical and organisational development changed over time, so too did the age of conversion. Table 5.5 shows that prior to the mid-1950s, over half of the respondents who joined the NOI were 36 years or over, 12 out of 21 (57%). The remaining 9 members were 35 years and under. Yet, in the next decade, a new phenomenon became apparent. There was an exceptional increase in membership, particularly of those between the ages of 20 and 35 years and the NOI began displaying a youthful face in its membership. There is, of course, no doubt that the NOI's young energetic ministers and officials, such as Malcolm X, had a great impact on the movement's substantial rise in membership and organisational expansion (Interview Dr A. Shabbaz, 1995a; Rashad, 1994). The other striking development noticeable from my findings (see table 5.5), was a sudden decline in membership in the mid-1960s: only 2 respondents reported that they joined at that time. This intriguing decrease in membership seems to be linked closely to developments in the NOI in the early 1960s, internal conflicts, power struggles and polarisation of the policies and objectives of the movement. This eventually led to the most contentious episode in the history of the NOI, namely the defection of Malcolm X from the movement and his subsequent assassination (these issues have already been discussed at length in Chapter III). The schism and its tragic consequences were to afflict the NOI's credibility for a long time and interrupted the steady rise in membership. The organisation never recaptured the glory of its heyday in the early 1960s, during the leadership of Elijah Muhammad (Lincoln, 1973).

Nevertheless, by the late 1960s and the early 1970s, the NOI began to resurrect its appeal among young Blacks mainly through the attractions of its economic programmes and strong organisational structure (Muwakkil, 1998; Interview, Aisha Mustapha, 1999). Almost all (42 out of 44) respondents for this period are under 35 years old. Apart from the NOI's promising programmes and teachings, the increase in membership and the regaining of its popularity, mostly among young AAs, could also be due to the suppression of the revolutionary nationalist Black Power groups by the US government's strategic programmes during this period (Marable, 1991). This seems to have left the NOI as the only uncontested alternative. The other surprising element in

this age group is related to the Black Power movements' inability to offer practical and pragmatic solutions to the socio-economic circumstances of the Black masses. Although the Black Power groups had radical, revolutionary, militant ideology and programmes to make substantial changes to the consciousness of young Blacks their attempts did not proceed beyond intellectual, rhetorical and utopian exercises. Those who realised that the Black Power movements could not provide tangible answers gradually lost their interest and dedication. When they noticed that the NOI was putting their ideals into practice, a significant number of young Blacks eventually joined the NOI (Interview, Aisha Mustapha, 1999). Muslim professionals and former Black Panther members like Fahizah Alim and Salim Muwakkil, for example, had also expressed the same views prior to their joining the NOI (Alim, 1998; Muwakkil, 1998).

Obviously, the age composition of my samples has changed considerably since the time they joined the NOI in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. My respondents' present age distribution, for those who joined the NOI in Elijah Muhammad's era is shown in Table 5.6. As expected the current age composition of my respondents' of the NOI Muslims is

Table 5.6. Current age distribution of Muslims who joined the NOI in Elijah Muhammad's era (1946-1975)

	Male	Female	Total
a) 36-45	5	4	9
b) 46-55	20	18	38
c) 56-65	16	12	28
d) 66-75	9	8	17
e) 76-over	8	4	12

mainly middle-aged and elderly. Since 1975, other components of demographical variables of my samples have also changed, such as marital status, educational levels, and socio-economic and occupational status. These variables will be examined in the following sections of this chapter.

5.2.2 Gender and Marital Status

The gender pattern has always been a unique aspect of the NOI membership. Like the UC (Barker, 1984) men have always been dominant in the membership of the movement. Since its inception in the early 1930s, the gender composition of the NOI's membership has never changed. Earlier studies on the NOI, for example those by Sahib (1951) and Lincoln (1973), noted that the NOI's membership was predominantly male.

The sex ratio of my samples of the NOI members corroborates the findings above; of 104 respondents 58 (56%) are males and 46 (44%) females. However it should be noted that the gap between the two genders started to narrow slightly from the early 1970s. The gender difference, however, becomes more salient with regard to the recruitment network and variation of motives for joining the NOI. These issues will be examined in Chapter VI.

Table 5.7. Marital status of members (1946-1975)

	Male	Female	Total
a) Single	20	15	35
b) Married	34	24	58
c) Widow / Widower	0	2	2
d) Divorced	4	4	8
e) Separated	0	1	1
Total:	58	46	104

Table 5.7 shows the marital status of my sample of 104 respondents: 58 (34 males and 24 females) were married at the time they joined the NOI. Of the remaining, 35 (20 males and 15 females) were single. However, the distribution of marital status differs between the two periods of the movement. Prior to the early 1960s, married members constituted the majority of the sample 58 (39: 67%). However, of the 35 in the later period, particularly in the early 1970s, single members formed the majority (24: 68%). The majority are now married and report that they have strong family structures: 75 out of 104, (41 males and 34 females). Almost 12% are widows and widowers (8 males and 5 females); 7 divorced (3 males and 4 females); 5 separated (3 males and 2 females).

From the information on my respondents' current marital status it is clear that the overwhelming majority of the old members of the NOI continued to have strong family structures. There is a close correlation between their status and the NOI's teachings, which firmly emphasise conservative values, such as a strong Muslim family and the differing male and female roles in the family structure. The NOI prescribed duties and responsibilities for both genders (E. Muhammad, 1959, 1965, AudioTape, Dec., 1967). Elijah Muhammad addressed his followers on marriage and family unity.

When you become one, one can be one. If you have to take away from one you should think in terms of one and work in the interest of one. Man and wife in Islam are one...woman must do her part as a wife. Birth children, nurse them and have a peaceful home...Muslim father must fulfil his role as family provider and protector ... (Elijah Muhammad, Audio-Tape, Dec, 1967).

The NOI's ideal Muslim family structure seems to be patriarchal, but it is an essential foundation as West (1994) properly argues, for strong and healthy family units to build 'a Nation'. For this ideal state, members of both sexes in the NOI were continuously educated through the movement's internal programmes such as MGT, GCC and FOI (see Chapter I) and they were taught family responsibility and how to observe healthy and strong family guidelines. Those who violated the rules of instruction were fined before their fellow-believers, depending on the degree of the violations of the NOI's teachings (Lomax, 1963). Muslim officials frowned upon the breakdown of family units, because the Muslim family was supposed to be an ideal exemplary family to show the Black masses the influence of the NOI.

5.2.3. Educational levels of the members

As with the majority of members of NRMs such as the UC (Barker, 1984) and the ISKON (Rochford, 1985) almost half of my sample of the NOI members had completed high school or attended junior high school prior to joining the movement. The educational variable is an important factor because the educational level affects the process and duration of recruitment and conversion to a movement (see Chapter VI). The educational status of NOI members, however, has differed over the period covered by my study. Sahib, for example, found that prior to the 1950s the majority of his sample in Chicago could not complete their schooling because of socio-economic

deprivation. In later years, although he did not give exact numbers, Lincoln noted some improvements in the educational achievements of NOI members. He found that recruitment to the movement was mostly ‘among low-income groups at the lower end of the educational scale. It [the NOI] has attracted a few intellectuals, an interesting number of college students’ (Lincoln, 1973:26).

My findings on the educational level of NOI members during the Hon. Elijah Muhammad’s leadership indicate similar results for both the pre-early 1960s and the later period: but they also trace the changes and developments of the members’ educational backgrounds since 1946. More interestingly, my informants’ educational levels also demonstrate how the NOI’s appeal and attraction has shifted from elementary and high school graduates to some college and even a few university graduates. As shown in Table 5.8, the largest group in my sample of 104, 39 (37%) completed high (including secondary) school. The second largest group, 24 (23%) had some college education (one or two years), mostly in technical skills. The breakdown into time

Table 5.8. Educational level of members at the time they joined the NOI (1946-1975)

	Male		Female		
	From 1946 to the early 1960s	From the early 1960s to 1975	From 1946 to the early 1960s	From the early 1960s to 1975	Total
a)Elementary School	9	1	6	1	17
b)High School drop out	4	1	3	2	10
c)High School	10	8	9	12	39
d)Some college courses	2	14	2	6	24
e)College/ University	1	7	0	4	12
f)Graduate	0	1	0	1	2

periods is interesting. Of the 46 members joining prior to the early 1960s, 15 (32%) had elementary schooling compared with only 2 of the 58 members who joined after the early 1960s. Nearly half of the total sample (49) attended various grades of high school

but among them around 20% dropped out at different grades. The percentage of high school graduates was the same for both periods.

As Table 5.8 clearly shows, the number of members who attended ‘some college courses’ or graduated from college or university is extremely low in the earlier period in comparison with the later. There was a considerable increase from 3% to 19% in the number of members who attended some college courses, particularly from the early 1960s onwards. It is also important to notice the growth in the number of college or university graduates, from 1 prior to the early 1960s to 13 post early 1960s. Although these results show the remarkable development of NOI members’ educational level, it is important to note that the majority of them only attended college from one to two years and majored chiefly in skilled or semi-skilled training courses. This was partly due to their socio-economic conditions and the higher educational policies of the USA but is also reflected in occupational patterns and social class as will be seen next.

The increase in educational level of my sample is not accidental when the recruitment ground and strategies of the NOI are taken into account. A substantial number of young Blacks first encountered the group and its members at educational establishments through the NOI’s activities and speaking engagements (see Chapter VI). From the early 1960s onwards the NOI launched a new recruitment strategy, deliberately targeting educational institutions, to attract educated young Blacks. The outcome of this recruitment strategy is obvious: 26 out of 58 respondents in my sample from the early 1960s onwards indicated that they had become familiar with the NOI through the group’s activities at college/university campuses (see, for example, Muwakkil and Alim’s accounts of their first encounters with the NOI at college campuses while they were studying). The NOI’s recruitment channels and strategies will be examined in detail in Chapter VI.

During my field research, when I asked my informants about their educational levels at the time they joined the NOI, they not only indicated their past educational attainments, but also very enthusiastically and passionately expressed the advances they had made in

their education since they had joined the group. Forty-six informants (26 males and 20 females) reported that they continued to make educational progress. Twenty-one respondents (12 males and 9 females), who were high school graduates at the time they joined the NOI, indicated that they had continued their education, taking technical, crafts, and secretarial courses at college. Ten respondents (6 males and 4 females), who had taken some college courses at the time of their affiliation reported that they continued to attend university. Of the remaining informants, 7 high school graduates (3 males and 4 females) went on to get university degrees, and 8 university/college graduates (5 males and 3 females) carried on with their studies and attained graduate degrees in the areas of religious studies, education, social sciences and journalism.

It is interesting to note that the majority of respondents who indicated advances in their educational level give credit for their achievement to the NOI's teachings and programmes. Since its inception, the NOI and its officials have given top priority to education and their educational programme,⁽¹¹⁾ the University of Islam, which aimed to educate Black people both mentally and spiritually (E. Muhammad, 1960, 1965). Apart from academic education, the NOI's schools have provided a programme of vocational education through the classes of the FOI, MGT and GCC. These courses were designed for those who did not have enough schooling to enter university. They aim to train and prepare members in various skills for better jobs and careers according to their individual talents (Interview # 8). More importantly, at these internal courses, members were encouraged and inspired to seek education for the benefit of their own kind. Elijah Muhammad encouraged his followers to be selective in seeking an education.

My people should get an education which will benefit their own people and not an education adding to the "storehouse" of their teacher. We need education, but an education which removes us from the shackles of slavery and servitude. Get an education, but not an education which leaves us looking to the slave-master for a job (1965:39ff).

The respondents reveal these motivations in their replies to the survey questionnaire, and in interviews and conversations. For example, a 55 year old male university lecturer believes that his dedication was fostered by the NOI's ideals which motivated his interest in education.

I was at 12th grade in high school when I came into Islam. The Nation offered Muslims a kind of training ground where certain values, ideal and principles were instilled. Honorable Elijah Muhammad told us that we have to get an education. Because it was the key to advance our own future ... Later I went to college. Then I earned a doctorate in religious studies/comparative religion from the University of Florida ...(Interview Dr A. Shabazz, 1995a, verbatim).

Respondent # 6's case is no different from that of Dr A. Shabazz. He is also an academic and teaches social sciences at a university in Chicago.

Another informant, who is a 47 year old self employed carpenter, indicates the advances he made after joining the NOI.

I completed high-school at the time I joined. The Nation organized classes for Muslims. Members specialize in the different subjects shared their skills, talents and knowledge with other Muslim brothers and sisters. Later I went a year technical college to establish my business (Respondent # 40).

A Muslim female teacher's comments also relate to similar inspirations and principles gained from the NOI.

I was a university student when I became a follower of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. The Nation's strong emphasis on education of our people and children caught my curiosity. After attending meetings several weeks I decided to join ... I was encouraged by the Minister at the Temple to be expertise on education ... Then I worked as a teacher at the University of Islam in Chicago ... (Respondent # 82).

The above accounts illustrate that the respondents were inspired by the NOI's teachings and programmes to change their social and educational status. Consequently, a number of Muslims have improved their education, although this has not always been the case. The NOI officials sometimes did not treat both sexes equally and were reluctant to encourage the education and employment of female members outside the community. In her study of female members who joined the movement in the 1960s, West (1994) noted that some expressed their disappointment at the officials' discouragement and their confinement to a more traditional female role.

5.2.4. Social Stratification and the Occupational Status of NOI Members

Social stratification is an important demographic variable which identifies the social class a religious movement attracts. Unlike the majority of NRMs that generally drew their devotees from young middle-class people (Downton, 1979; Barker, 1981, 1984;

Rochford, 1985), NOI members, particularly during most of Elijah Muhammad's leadership, came essentially from the Black lower and working classes. The NOI attracted AAs largely from the under privileged strata of American society. However, social and political changes and the turmoil caused by civil rights and race relations in the 1960s influenced the social class composition of the NOI from the late 1960s onwards.

As was discussed earlier with regard to socio-economic deprivation, several studies on the NOI (Beynon, 1938; Sahib, 1951; Howard, 1965; Lincoln, 1973) have shown that the majority of its members in the past, especially prior to the early 1960s, were drawn mostly from the Black lower and working classes of unskilled and semi-skilled occupational status. Yinger contended that there is a close link between religion, social stratification and protest. He suggested not only that 'religion is shaped by the stratification systems of complex societies, but also that it is involved in protests against those systems' (1970:282). Further, he explains:

If one sees it [religion] as a cumulative product of many persons, making their religious interpretations in a specific social cultural environment, then the shaping influence of values and needs of the stratum in which it develops is highly important. Once the "tone", the basic view of the nature of man and the problem of evil, is fixed in a religious system, under the selective emphases of one stratum, that tone will affect other strata who come within the religious tradition (1970:290).

However, the homogenous class character of NOI members, who were generally identified with the Black lower classes prior to the late 1950s, has begun to change slightly. Earlier Beynon, (1938) also pointed out the relative socio-economic improvements of the NOI members in comparing with the situation of AAs during the Great Depression in the 1930s. In the early 1960s, Parenti indicated that how the success of NOI's socio-economic programmes and teachings have influenced and reflected in all aspects of the movement, from revolution to institution, organisational structures and policies, and members' socio-economic statuses. Essien-Udom (1970) particularly noticed this shift, observing that although the members of the group were still in the lower brackets of education and income levels, their behaviour patterns and life styles revealed an aspiring middle-class. The data on the occupational status of my respondents at the time they joined the NOI, shows this change as regards both jobs and

time periods. Table 5.9 shows clearly that, on the basis of occupational criteria by social class, the NOI members in my sample were predominantly drawn from the Black lower and working classes prior to the 1960s. But for the later period the same could not be said. The occupational patterns of my informants seem to have improved slightly and their social class composition moved upward. As the findings shown in Table 5.9 indicate, the largest occupational grouping overall is 'unskilled' jobs: for example, janitor, home-cleaner, maid, bell boy, farmer, labourer, railroad worker, dish washer, odd jobs,⁽¹²⁾ etc. A higher proportion from the pre 1960s forms this group. Unemployed members also form a significant group. The occupational distributions of NOI members in my sample are consistent with their educational levels when the two periods are taken into account separately. It is surprising that there was no one in the 'senior Professional and Managerial' occupational group in either period. Moreover, in the first period, there

Table 5.9. Occupational status of members at the time they joined the NOI (1946-1975)

	From 1946 to the early 1960s	From the early 1960s to 1975	Total
a) Senior Professional & Managerial	0	0	0
b) Professional & Executive	1	6	7
c) Secretarial / Technical / Supervisory / Skilled	3	10	13
d) Semi-skilled	4	11	15
e) Unskilled	21	9	30
f) Student	3	12	15
g) Military	1	4	5
h) Homemaker / Housewife	5	3	8
i) Unemployed	8	3	11
Total	46	58	104

were no significant numbers in the 'Professional and Executive', and the 'Secretarial, Technical Supervisory and Skilled' occupational groupings, only 1 and 3 people respectively. Even the number of 'semi-skilled' recruits was limited: only 4 respondents pointed out that they had jobs such as bus driver, car factory worker, shoe repairer, meat cutter, barber, etc. Of the remaining members, 3 were students, 5 housewives and 1

military. This narrow range of occupational types seems to be closely related to their socio-economic deprivations. However, the homogenous occupational grouping appears to alter in the second period, from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s. The ranges of occupational groups reported in a given period reflect the social mobility of the NOI members in my study. The data for this period also point out that the NOI not only appealed to those who had unskilled manual jobs or were unemployed, but that it also began to attract technical, clerical and skilled people, and from the late 1960s onwards some professionals. In this period the number of members who had technical and clerical, skilled and semi-skilled jobs almost tripled, while there was a sharp decrease in the number of those with unskilled jobs and the unemployed. The other gripping development is that the number of students increased significantly in comparison with the early period, from 3 to 12. This outcome is consistent with the changes in the NOI's recruitment grounds and strategies.

The above results on the occupational groupings of NOI members conform with the self-rated social class status of the members. In a separate question in the survey questionnaire they were asked 'How did you describe your class background?' at the time they joined the NOI. The overwhelming majority of my respondents, 91 out of 104, (87%) reported that they were lower and working class people. Only 13 respondents reported that they were Black middle class, and all of this group except for 2 had joined the NOI from the late 1960s onwards.

Apart from their occupation at the time they joined the NOI, my informants also proudly reported their current profession, I assume in order to allude to how the NOI's teachings and programmes had made a positive impact on their socio-economic life and status both at the individual and collective levels. Table 5.10 shows the respondents' present occupational status. It is apparent that the current social class profile of the old NOI members is remarkably different from what it was at the time they joined the movement. These Muslims' upward social mobility is not accidental. There is no doubt that there is a causal linkage between Elijah Muhammad's strong emphasis on economic improvement, self-help, strict moral conduct focused on economic activity and ascetic

Table 5.10 Current occupational status of the old NOI members (1975-2000))

	Male	Female	Total
a) Senior Managerial & Professional	6	2	8
b) Professional & Executive	13	9	22
c) Secretarial/Technical / Supervisory/Skilled	18	17	35
d) Semi-skilled	5	4	9
e) Unskilled	3	2	5
f) Housewife & Homemaker	0	4	4
g) Retired	12	8	20
h) Unemployed	1	0	1

lifestyle (E. Muhammad, 1965; Lincoln, 1973), and Muslims' upgraded socio-economic status. Such practices and discipline enabled Muslims to keep the NOI well financed and to have regular and stable employment. Moreover, the NOI's economic and 'do for self' teachings has inspired members to invest, both collectively and individually, in a number of small and successful business enterprises. Because of this they have been described 'Black puritans' (Lincoln, 1973), 'petit bourgeois' (Parenti, 1964), and 'Black capitalists' (Pinkney, 1975). Similarly, Smith (1984) and Thomas (1986) have noted substantial changes in the pre-convert and post-convert socio-economic status of NOI Muslims. This direct or indirect relationship between the socio-economic development of members and the ideology of a religious group is found in Max Weber's concepts of 'elective affinity' and the 'Protestant ethic'. Elective affinity means that the believer or member of a group is a bearer of ideas and he/she will select and follow the messages of the group's leader' using only those ideas that have an affinity with his/her material interests (Gerth and Mills, 1958). The Protestant ethic refers to a causative relation between religious ideas and socio-economic development. Weber argued that a believer's religious practices and ethic could lead to 'unintentional' economic consequences (Weber, 1958). Several studies have addressed the question of change in the socio-economic status of Muslims by linking it with the NOI's teachings and programmes (Parenti, 1964; Tyler, 1966; Mamiya, 1982, 1983).

The informants in the sample from that period often relate improvements in their socio-economic status, both individually and collectively, to Elijah Muhammad's 'economic blueprints', 'do for self' teachings, and the moral and social reform and discipline they received in the group. In answer to the question in the survey questionnaire 'How far did the economic teachings and strong tradition of self-help in the Nation help to make Muslims better off?', without exception, all my respondents who joined in that given era indicated the positive, substantial and constructive contributions of the NOI. The accounts of Muslims clearly show this causal linkage; a 57 year old taxi driver, for example, gives credit to Elijah Muhammad's programmes for the way they trained and instructed AAMs.

They [the NOI's teachings] gave brothers and sisters directions, stability, the desire to do something for self. And it was wonderful instructions for the Black man who had been downtrodden and beaten down by this country in the ways of America. The Messenger Muhammad was a great man indeed great works, if you had been lived during that time you would know ... (Interview, D.S. Adil, 1995, verbatim).

A 50 year old Muslim sister who worked as a principal in the NOI schooling system and currently has a role in the Masjid's programmes as an instructor for female Muslims, points out the collective impact of the movement's teachings.

The teachings were a lesson to our people to let us know we could accomplish that which we were taught we could not reach. But Allah showed us we could with a unity (Respondent # 2).

A 47 year old Muslim official, resident Imam at a Masjid, called attention to the social and psychological effects of the teachings and how they helped members rid themselves of inferiority complexes.

They gave us a sense of pride and the self-confidence that we could accomplish for ourselves. We could say to others that we owned these stores, these buildings, this grocery store. This made our people proud to be part of it. It was very successful (Respondent # 14).

Another female member, 69 years old and retired, refers to how the NOI's programmes and teachings disciplined and made people responsible and industrious. She said,

In all phases of our lives, we were disciplined. We were dedicated. We obeyed! Look at the prosperity of Muslims in America who strive to become successful in their businesses. You can see behind their successes the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's programmes and teachings (Respondent # 17).

These accounts by Muslims show that the NOI's programmes and teachings disciplined, trained and created industrious and proud people collectively and individually out of socio-economically deprived individuals dissatisfied with the system in which they were brought up. Moreover, the impact of upward social mobility is not only limited to their economic and occupational circumstances. Since 1975, they have also influenced the direction of the movement and Muslims' consciousness. These issues will be briefly examined in Chapter VII.

5.2.5. Prior Religious and Denominational Affiliation and Religiosity

A major question that arises concerning the background of NOI members is their religious past. This matter has been partly addressed earlier in the section on 'Religious Seekership' where we found that a significant number of informants had become disillusioned and dissatisfied with the practices, symbols and stance of the established religion of society, Christianity.

The majority of the NOI members in my sample were members of one of the established denominations of Christianity prior to joining the movement. However, their attachment to religious bodies was nominal only.⁽¹³⁾ A significant number of individuals in the sample indicated that they were not attending religious services strictly at the time they joined. Moreover, 14 respondents (13%) in the sample reported that they had no interest in or affiliation with any religion whatsoever. The religiosity of the NOI members prior to joining differs as regards both the period when they joined and their age. Religiosity was relatively higher among those who joined prior to the early 1960s and they were largely middle-aged or elderly. Those who joined after the early 1960s, in contrast, were younger and had no strong religious convictions (Lincoln, 1973).⁽¹⁴⁾

Historically, membership of the NOI has generally been predominantly ex-Christian (Lincoln, 1973). There has also been a high degree of uniformity in the religious backgrounds of the NOI's members; various sects and denominations of Protestant Christianity, Baptists among them, have always been overrepresented (Sahib, 1951;

Smith, 1984). My findings support earlier data. Moreover, they display both the fragmentation of religious affiliation and a decrease in converts' religiosity. As indicated in Table 5.11, most of my sample of NOI members grew up in Protestant families. Over 33% (35) were raised as Baptist, while a further 16% (17) reported a Methodist background and 6 informants had been attached to the Episcopalian Church. Those with a Methodist background specified which branch of the Methodist Church they had belonged to. The majority of AAs are members of Black Churches, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church and the National Baptist Convention, Inc. (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990; Baer and Singer, 1992). Some of those 17 Methodists might have belonged to one or other of the Black Methodist Churches. A significant number of respondents from a Christian background reported

Table 5.11. Religious and denominational (sect) affiliation of members at the time they joined NOI (1946-1975)

	Male	Female	Total
a) Baptist	21	14	35
b) Methodist	8	9	17
c) Episcopalian	4	2	6
d) Presbyterian	3	4	7
e) Catholic	4	3	7
f) Other Christian Denominations (Lutheran, United Church of Christ, Seventh Day Adventist, Jehovah's Witnesses)	5	6	11
g) Black Islamic and Hebrews (MST, NOI, Black Hebrews)	3	4	7
h) None/ no interest in religion/ no affiliation	10	4	14
Total:	58	46	104

affiliation to various other Christian denominations including Presbyterian (7), Lutheran (5), United Church of Christ (3), Jehovah's Witnesses (2), and Seventh Day Adventists (1). It is interesting to note the small number of members in the sample whose background was Catholic (7). One reason so few of my informants were Catholics at the time of recruitment was because some had been 'religious switchers' who had become attached to several denominations during their searching. For example, 12 respondents indicated that they had been affiliated with more than one sect prior to their recruitment to the NOI. Of these, 8 were at first Catholics; subsequently 4 joined the Baptists, 2 the

Presbyterians and 2 the Methodists. Of the remaining seekers, a Lutheran became a Baptist, 2 Seventh Day Adventists joined the Methodists and a Baptist joined the United Church of Christ. Their motives for seeking were not religious per se. Rather, they moved from one sect to another because of that religious institution's stance towards Black people's issues and problems. This mobile religious seeking has already been commented on in the section on 'Religious Seekership' in this chapter.

The remaining respondents came from non-Christian backgrounds. 14 had no religious affiliation. 7 were Black Muslims or Hebrews, 3 of them having been born into the NOI community. The other 4 informants were members of the MST (2) and the Black Hebrews (2) before joining the movement.

It is interesting to notice those who did not indicate any religious attachments. Under one of the choices in the survey questionnaire, 'other', they largely made statements such as 'none', 'not applicable', 'no interest in religion' and 'no affiliation'. Their low degree of interest in religion varied according to the periods they join and their age (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995b). Of the 14 with no religious affiliation only 3 joined the NOI prior to the early 1960s. From the mid-1960s onwards a significant number of my respondents, who were young at the time, were actively involved in or sympathised with the revolutionary ideologies and programmes of the Black Power movements in which religion played insignificant role (Marable, 1991). Rather, these movements advocated and focused on radical issues of ethnic identity, social reforms and economic and political empowerment of the Black people. In fact, for a large number of my informants these aforementioned issues and concerns were the main attraction of the NOI, rather than the purely religious and spiritual aspects of the movement. These are themes that will be analysed in Chapter VI.

Chapter Five: Notes

- 1) This period covers the year of 1963.
- 2) The impacts of the NOI's economic principles and motives like 'do for self', 'We must do for ourselves', 'own your own' and 'buy black' on its members' socio-economic conditions will be discussed in detail later in the relevant part of the this chapter.
- 3) For the rise and decline of Black Power movements and their basic revolutionary political and economic agendas, see Marable, 1992, Chs. V and VI, and Van Deburg, 1992.
- 4) The stereotype of 'Uncle Tom' represented the supposed features of the black race described as 'gentleness, patience, humility, and great-hearted altruism, even in the face of abuse ... other worldly and escapist loyalty to the master, and having the enduring power of unshakeable faith ...'. For the different typologies of the Uncle Tom myth, see Moses (1982), Ch. IV, pp. 49-66.
- 5) These religio-nationalist groups include the MST, the NOI, Black Hebrews etc.
- 6) Similar results were obtained in Howard's (1965) sociological study conducted in the early 1960s among the NOI's members in San Diego.
- 7) However in the 1960s, the Black Church became a source of inspiration for the civil rights groups and their demonstrations, see Marx, 1969.
- 8) For further discussion of the Marxist perspective of religion and relations between Marxism and religion, see Turner (1983) and McLellan (1987).

9) The case of Emmett Till who was murdered in 1955 sparked the modern civil rights movement. He was a young black boy about 14 years old from Chicago who went to visit relatives in a small rural town in Mississippi every summer. While he was in Mississippi on holiday he allegedly whistled at 23 years old white female in small grocery store where her family worked. Girl's mother reported to her relatives that a black boy whistled at her daughter in store. Her husband became very upset over the incident. The girl's father and another man took Emmett from his bed at gunpoint from his relative's house, both whites, at the night. He was never seen again alive. His badly decompose body was found and shown through the media to the entire country, and people were outraged. He was badly beaten murdered in savage way. The two white men charged with the murder and brought to trial, but they were found innocent and set free. (See T. A. Muhammad (1987) *From Plantation to Muslim: A Unique Transformation*. T. A. Publishing Co., Inc. Chicago, ILL. pp. 159-163.

10) Other miscellaneous works, such as Hedaithy (1985), Khan (1978) and Anway (1996) also report that the average age of conversion to Islam generally occurs in early middle age, ranging from the late twenties to the late forties.

11) Several researchers have studied the NOI's ideal educational objectives and its school system. The NOI school system was basically the same as that of the public schools and combines all grades from the First to Twelfth that include elementary, secondary and high school in the USA. But its emphases and priorities in teaching make it very distinctive, for example, the history of the Blacks, their culture and civilisation; compulsory teaching of the Arabic language; education being given alongside religious instruction and separate education for boys and girls. For further information about the NOI educational objectives and schools see, for example, Shalaby, 1972; Hudson, 1976; Marshall, 1976; Whiteside, 1987.

12) The job descriptions indicated as 'odd jobs' are those presumably involved in prostitution, drugs, etc.

13) Sahib (1951) found that the majority of NOI members were not religious and knew very little about the Bible and religious issues.

14) Imam W. D. Mohammed describes the religiosity of old NOI members in two-time periods. He says that prior to the early 1960s the NOI members were more religious and God-fearing people who joined the movement religious and moral reasons. However, those who joined the NOI from the early 1960s to 1975 Imam points out that they were more nationalist and joined the movement for political and material reasons (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995b).

CHAPTER VI

Conversion and Alternation? The Religious Experience of the Nation of Islam Members During Elijah Muhammad's Era (1946-1975)

Becoming a member or becoming Muslim and joining the Nation of Islam (NOI) are complex phenomena. It seems inadequate to account for the experiences of those who joined the NOI simply as conversion. Their becoming members of the NOI and Muslims was not simply a case of religious conversion. Rather, it included elements of race, ethnicity, nationalism, political awakening and consciousness of self and identity. There were diverse factors and motives involved in and affecting the members' decision-making processes in joining the movement. These were predominantly social, economic and organisational not religious such as racial and ethnic pride and identity, self-respect and self-worth, knowledge of self, economic teachings and programmes, strong unity, leadership and organisation, nationalistic and militant agendas, religious and spiritual teachings, conservative and family values, treatment of Black women, a clean life, discipline and responsibility and educational objectives and programmes. The multi-faceted nature of the experience of NOI members makes it necessary to consider other terms such as alternation or alteration and reversion.

In this chapter, first the relevance and applicability of the terms conversion, reversion and alternation or alteration will be discussed in relation to the change and transformation experiences of the NOI members in Elijah Muhammad's leadership. Second, the NOI's recruitment strategies, how and through which channels and networks people joined the movement and the duration of their decision-making for joining will be examined. Third, the kinds of responses they received from their parents, families and friends will be taken into account. Fourth, I will analyse which aspects, what kind of teachings, programmes and emphases of the NOI appealed to and attracted AAs.

6.1. The Relevance and Applicability of Conversion, Alteration and Reversion

As we have seen in the partial analysis and discussion in Chapter IV, it is possible to interpret and describe the religious experiences of those who joined the NOI by using various conceptualisations. Each of these concepts embraces different areas of the changes undergone by the subjects but not all subjects experiencing every change and transition.

In the light of popular and broad definitions of conversion as ‘a radical transformation of consciousness, including self and identity’ (Machalek and Snow, 1993:54; Snow and Machalek, 1984), ‘the process of changing a sense of root reality’, ‘a conscious shift in one’s sense of grounding’ (Heirich, 1977:673-74) and ‘a radical reorganization of identity, meaning and life’ (Travisano, 1970:600) not all NOI members seemed to have experienced all these, or at least not to such an extent. These assertions will be discussed in the following section.

6.1.1. Conversion as a Search of Comfortable Identity and its Restoration

Though the AAs in my sample have undergone radical changes in religion, morality and conduct, they do not seem to have undergone drastic transformations of consciousness, identity and self. When they became Muslims and members of the NOI, they reorganised their lives, behaviour, conduct in public and roles. However, I could not be certain that the AAs underwent fundamental changes of identity and self as far as their race, ethnicity and worldviews are concerned. The NOI and similar movements appear to have put more emphasis on race, self and identity issues rather than on religious and spiritual matters. In fact, these movements sought to form a positive identity for their members in order to restore the AAs’ righteous nature, religious past and dignified sense of identity and image with which they could feel more comfortable, be identified and associated with. More importantly, most Black religio-nationalist movements and in particular the NOI as such, have negated the stereotypical symbols, images and identities imposed by the dominant White society, such as Negro, Colored, Black, etc. (Lincoln, 1973; Essien-Udom, 1970).

From the beginning of the twentieth century onwards AAs have been in the process of awakening and searching for the truths of their history, identity, religion and culture outside White America and the institution of slavery, both of which were sources of racial stigmatisation. In Heirich's words, they were seeking 'a sense of root reality' and 'grounding of their existence' (1977:674). The NOI sought to counter the socio-economic, identity and psychological dilemmas of those Blacks who were living in densely populated areas in large urban settings. The salient aspects of the NOI's teachings established a close connection between AAs' self-identity, history, ancestral past and Islam. Young and Chassy adequately interpret the NOI's efforts as 'a restoration of identity' (1971). Islam was portrayed as 'the original and natural religion of Blacks Nation' (Elijah Muhammad, 1957, 1965) that was introduced to AAs by 'the will of God' in order to uplift them and restore their lost and stolen identity, religion and history. Elijah Muhammad emphatically maintained that

It is Allah's (God's) will and purpose that we shall know ourselves. Therefore He came Himself to teach us the knowledge of self ... He has declared that we are descendant of the Asian Black nation and of the tribe of Shabazz (E. Muhammad, 1965:31).

He connected AAs with this history and their roots outside America purely on emotional and psychological grounds, not on established scholarly bases. Elijah Muhammad focused on the importance of the issue of identity. He states that

One of the first and most important truths that must be established in this day is our identity. This is what our God, Whose Proper Name is Allah, is guiding me to point out to you, my people, who are members of the Lost and Found Nation in North America. You, my people, who have been robbed of your complete identity for over 400 years. Is it not time for you to know who you are after 400 years of submission to the white slave-masters of America and their false religion of Christianity? (E. Muhammad, 1965:54).

Moreover, he touched on the central components of identity and colour. Elijah Muhammad emphatically rejected the image and identity of the AAs dictated by the establishment, saying that,

We are not Negroes, because God, whose proper name is Allah, has taught me who we are. We are not 'colored' people because God has taught me who the colored people are. The American Negroes is without knowledge of self. You are a so-called Negro because you are 'not' a Negro. Allah has given to me our proper names, the people from whom we were taken and brought here to the shores of North America and the history of our forefathers ... (E. Muhammad, 1965:34).

The primary emphasis of the NOI's objectives and ideology was to wake up the 'mentally dead', 'blind', 'abused', morally and spiritually lost, socio-economically

deprived Blacks of America. Throughout the movement's history the issues of identity, self-knowledge and race consciousness have been an essential part of its teachings, recruitment strategy and attraction as a way of restoring and boosting AAs' psychology, dignity and morale (Essien-Udom, 1970; Young and Chassy, 1971). The significance of these concerns is confirmed by the findings of my survey. The NOI's members who joined during Elijah Muhammad's era were asked what were their main reasons and motives for joining the NOI and to give their four most important incentives. Eighty out of 104 respondents indicated that the movement's teachings on identity, self, race and ethnic pride and consciousness, etc. were among the NOI's attractions, along with other teachings and programmes. Their answers for why they joined, and what the NOI's attractions for them were, will be discussed and explored at length later in the chapter.

The account of a 63 year old Muslim male professional clearly spells out the identity and image crises of AAs and how the NOI used these as a recruitment strategy and attraction.

The doctrine of Hon. Elijah Muhammad was to reverse the psychology of our people. What he had to do first was he had to take the negativity, bad image and complexes of being Black away from people who were blind, dumb, mentally and spiritually dead and lost ... But there was a time where Black had a very derisive meaning and was identified with bad things and darkness. The best you could do was maybe be 'Negro'... even Hon. Elijah Muhammad always used 'so-called American Negro'. Because the Negro itself he thought where that term come from ... Hon. Elijah Muhammad realized that Christian religion was designed primarily around Caucasians. The images angels are white and bad, darkness and negativity are Black. If you look at the Bible, it is full of pro white elements ... Hon. Elijah Muhammad saw that I have to turn this around. I have to force and put into the minds of the African-American, Negro, Black, the recognition that Black is alright, but not only alright, it is superior. So that was how he began working on reversing the images and feelings of our people. He took the same kind of method and strategy that degraded the African Americans and he began degrading Caucasians. So as he got the African Americans starting to feel alright about being Black, alright about where you come from, then he began to give less emphasis about 'white man being devil'... (Interview #7, paraphrased).

Imam W. D. Mohammed's comments further indicate the process of psychological impact, identity changes and belonging on AAs. He states that,

Our people have never enjoyed a comfortable sense of identity. We're called Negroes by other people, we didn't call ourselves Negro. We're called colored by other people. We didn't call ourselves colored. And most of our people now I think they feel comfortable to call themselves African American. There is some who still they don't care to be called African Americans. They've just got to be called Americans or Blacks you know. But I think Rev. Jesse Jackson, he was the one that came out and he asked all of us, all Blacks in America, to accept the name to be called African Americans. So we, we supported that. Yeah we supported that because we're Americans and from Africa, African ancestry (Imam W. D. Mohammad, Interview 1995b, verbatim).

However, conversion and becoming a member of the NOI not only make and entail fundamental and radical changes of identity, self and sense of belonging but also require substantial changes, which encompass and direct a member's daily life and activities. In this respect, Glock and Stark's understanding of conversion seems to be more helpful. They stress 'a major discontinuity in behaviour - a drastic shift in orientation of his valuation of reality' (Glock and Stark, 1965:6-7). Besides accepting the precepts of the NOI's ideology and programmes, becoming a member of the movement involves adapting public behaviour to a set of NOI expectations, as well as modifying private behaviour and observing moral and religious codes to conform to NOI mores. Members therefore experience fundamental changes and adaptation to new behaviour, conduct and daily activities that every member is supposed to observe under NOI rules and guidelines. These are clear signs of their conversions and becoming full or registered members of the NOI.

6.1.2. Alternation or Alteration as an Extension of the Existing Worldviews and Perspectives

Becoming a member of the NOI has unique characteristics. It can not simply be accounted for as a conversion which has religious connotations. Those who joined the movement did not always undergo radical transformation and reorganisation of consciousness, identity and self as far as racial and ethnic identity, nationalistic sentiments and Black issues were concerned. Upon being introduced to the NOI's teachings, the majority of AAs found their existing views articulated as a coherent ideology. In other words, the outlook already existed and most of them had been vaguely aware of existence of the movement prior to joining it. The NOI simply provided organisational support for their views and attitudes and placed them within the framework of a highly articulated ideology and programme. It seems, therefore, to be also appropriate to interpret the AAs' recruitment experience to the NOI during the Elijah Muhammad's era as 'alternation' (Travisano, 1970) or 'alteration' (Gordon, 1974).

Travisano and Gordon's arguments of transition and change of identity, attitude and perspective are helpful in this regard. To distinguish between the changes and transitions that happen and develop as a result of natural processes and radical and drastic transformation which are features of conversion, they employ the terms *alternation* and *alteration* respectively. Travisano, for example, argues that 'alternations are transitions to identities which are prescribed or at least permitted within the person's established universes of discourse' (1970:601). Contrary to conversion, in alternation changes are 'relatively easily accomplished' and 'do not evolve a radical' transformation in one's 'universe of discourse and informing aspects' but they 'grow out of existing programmes of behaviour' (*Ibid.*). In Gordon's words it 'does not involve radical discontinuity'. It is rather 'a new stage or extension of former identity' (Gordon, 1974:165-66). Travisano's study of Jews who had become fundamental Christians and Jews who had become members of a Unitarian Society provides a useful example with which to compare and analyse the NOI members' particular transformations. He argues that Jews who became fundamental Christians represented the characteristics of conversion while those who became members of a Unitarian Society represented the features of alternation.

It seems appropriate to consider that the degree of change undergone by my informants was the same as that of the Jews who became members of a Unitarian Society. As has already been discussed in Chapter V, a large number of the informants was actively involved in or supported Black religio-nationalist, or socio-cultural organisations prior to joining the NOI. This means that the majority of my respondents already had some form or other of consciousness of race and identity before becoming members of the movement. Therefore, I maintain that the majority of my samples experienced 'a new stage' or 'extension' (Gordon, 1974) and continuation of their former consciousness and '*Weltanschauung*' in which their 'established universe of discourses' (Travisano, 1970) permitted the changes. In Balch and Taylor's words, it was 'the logical extension' (1977) of not only spiritual but also nationalist, race and identity awareness. Earlier studies of the NOI have also found that AAs were racially, ethnically and nationalistically awakened prior to their joining the movement (Sahib, 1951; Howard, 1965; Essien-Udom, 1970). Of even greater interest are the answers my informants gave

to a specific question in the survey questionnaire and interviews asking whether or not they felt a close connection between their existing views at the time they joined the NOI and those of the NOI. Table 6.1 shows clearly that the majority of NOI members in my sample considered there to be a close affinity between their prior views and the NOI's teachings and programmes. Just over 66% of my informants stated that the NOI's ideas were similar to their former consciousness, awareness and feeling. Further, just over 22% of the respondents reported that there was some correlation between their earlier beliefs and the ideology of the NOI's. Only 11% of the total respondents reported that

Table.6.1 When you joined the NOI, did you feel that there was a close connection between your existing ideas and the NOI's? (1946-1975)

	From 1946 to the early 1960s		From the early 1960s to 1975		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
a) Yes; extensively; very much so; very closely related.	18	13	22	16	69
b) Somewhat; to some extent yes.	6	4	7	6	23
c) Not really; not clearly; I was not quite sure.	3	2	2	5	12
Total	27	19	31	27	104

they were not quite sure or did not feel that there was a clear connection between their old ideas and propensities, and those of the NOI's. The following accounts of my samples further illustrate my argument that the transitions they experienced were alternation or alteration. A 55 year old Muslim official expresses his former personal feelings compared with and movement's stance,

Yeah, I felt it was. Because during that period as it is now there was a lot of racism and discrimination against the people of African descent. The Hon. Elijah Muhammad, he was forefront of bringing the change to the world, this problem. And doing it not in passivist way but in a militant way. That way was very attractive. The Hon. Elijah Muhammad's plan was actually to wake up our people. It is also the idea of unity of our people and self-reliance was a very strong attraction ... and the things about the African American leadership and different image (Interview, Imam Murad B. Deen, 1997, verbatim).

A 57 year old self-employed male's response highlights the identity of AAs and historical facts.

Yes, it was all related. It answered a lot of questions, our people's history, identity, experience and conditions. It also answered my doubts about the nature of white man. A lot of things became clear. I thank Almighty God-Allah for leading me in this direction I had been searching for before coming to the Nation (Interview, D. S. Adil, 1995, verbatim).

A local Imam's comments strengthen my argument that it is also appropriate to interpret AAMs' recruitment to the NOI as 'alternation' or 'alteration'.

So we were all ready, many of my friends and myself all were thinking nationalistic, Black Nationalism. We were already in that frame of mind, cultural consciousness of African American people ...' (Interview, Imam Rabbani Mubashir, 1995, verbatim).

A 70 year old female who said her job before joining the Nation was a prostitute, also shows similar issues of awareness of self and race in her comments.

Self pride in my race and my Black people. Also I liked being The Queen of the Planet Earth. I liked the feeling of nobility. It came natural to me (Respondent # 17).

A female medical professional believed that AAs had a special mission in the course of history.

Yes, I felt that Black people played a special role plus that they were handed a 'divine' destiny to make a difference in this country and the world (Respondent # 5).

A local Masjid Imam briefly explained that there was a close connection between the views of the NOI and for him and the majority of people joining the movement.

That's the reason why I joined and most of our people joined! (Respondent # 14).

However, a 44 year old female journalist who joined the NOI in the early 1970s and currently works as the editor of a Muslim newspaper, contrasted two opposite traditions of civil rights movements: integrationist and separatist. Having come from a family heavily involved in the civil rights movement, she contends that both civil rights groups and nationalist movements worked for the same cause: Black interests.

Yes, yes, of course. I found that what my father had worked for what those in the civil rights movements had worked for was parallel to what the NOI was achieving. You know, you have to offer African American history, you can look at particular figures in history. You can always see parallels even though you think they're working on different level. You know we always come, we quite backed to W. B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington. And the Great Debate, you know, they're almost like oppose to each other. But in fact, they both had the best interest for race at hand. They just thought they were better, both thought they had a better avenue to achieve it. So when I looked at the NOI, I looked at civil rights movements, they both had our community's best interests at hand and they both ought to have better way to achieve it. The NOI at that time was teaching separatism, separating completely from White establishment, white social order, as the best way to achieve it. The civil rights movements those who we're always being face of the White America to force them to accept those [African Americans] as people own, their own level morally, socially and mentally (Interview, Aisha Mushapha, 1999, verbatim).

More interestingly, the remarks of Minister L. Farrakhan who joined the NOI in the mid-1950s suggest that it would be more comprehensible to interpret the changes that AAs experienced in contextual circumstances. AA individuals and groups had already formed ideologies, which reflect a very close parallel with the NOI's long before joining the movement.

First let me say that in order to understand what's called 'conversion experience' we have to put this in some context. All my life even as a Christian I thought of the plight and suffering of Black People in America and throughout the world. And I often cried myself to sleep wondering about my Sunday school Bible lessons. If God was so merciful to send Prophets to people who suffered from oppression in the past, why would not God send someone to deliver us from our oppression ... Deep in my heart I hungered most for the liberation of my people. And so when I heard that God had raised a man up in America to deliver our people from oppression, my first impression was I had tears in my eyes and I walked down the street in Boston, Massachusetts, and I said to God, I said 'God why didn't you call me, you know I love my people'. And then I thought, oh when Elijah Muhammad was raised up I was not even born. So my next thought was to go to him and to hear him, and offer myself to him for the purpose of delivering our people. Then later I met Malcolm X and heard some disturbing things about Muslim teachings. And so I wasn't quite ready to go and meet Mr Muhammad [Elijah]. And finally when I was playing in a Night Club here in Chicago, one of my friends asked me to go and hear him which I did. I don't say that I fully understood everything that he taught but what I heard and what I saw I liked. So I joined. And later in New York I went to the Mosque and I heard Malcolm X. And then I was really convinced truly that this was the place that I wanted to be. So I can't consider it a conversion experience. Because I hungered for this all my life, it's what I wanted it. So when I heard what I heard, I knew I had to accept it. Yeah I was ready. And so yes there was a change but not a drastic change (Interview, Minister Louis Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

The above accounts and the results of my sample indicate that a large number of the NOI members appear to have formed a similar ideology to that of the NOI prior to their joining it. That's why I maintain that they were not subjected to radical and drastic changes in terms of their highly developed awareness and consciousness of self, race, identity and the historical experience of Black people. Apart from their religious, spiritual and moral patterns, it is also possible to account for my informants' and indeed, for the majority of the NOI members' joining the movement as alternation or alteration. This is because what they did was an 'extension', modification or 'new stage' of their former ideas and propensities. Nevertheless, in this context other factors do have a role, such as the social and demographic conditions of the recruitment ground and recruitment networks. As was discussed in Chapter V the majority of my sample lived in 'social', 'cultural' and 'socio-political' milieus of urban Black neighbourhoods (Essien-Udom, 1970). Again as will be analysed later, a large number of respondents had heard of the NOI through networks of friends and relatives. Therefore, they had been vaguely aware of the existence of the movement prior to their affiliation with it,

but membership did not become a meaningful option until they had developed an outlook fundamentally compatible with that of the NOI.

6.1.3. Reversion as a Rediscovery and Reclaiming of a Lost and Stolen Identity and Religion

The term ‘reversion’ denotes a variety of changes and discoveries in an individual’s life, including sense of identity and belonging, consciousness and belief. Further, it denotes a process of change back to an earlier, original or former state rather than a move forward with novel changes. As partly argued in Chapter IV, it is possible to account for AAs’ joining the NOI as reversion, although it seems implausible. This interpretation derives from three assumptions; the first two are directly related to the NOI’s teachings and hypotheses. The last one reflects a more general explanation among Muslim converts, regardless of their race, ethnicity, culture and origin of religion maintaining that they felt that they had ‘always been Muslim’ and their conversion occurred ‘naturally’ (Khan, 1978; Poston, 1992; Köse, 1996). The NOI’s teachings and hypotheses regarding two of the assumptions particularly support my argument that for AAs who join the movement we could interpret this as reversion by highlighting their efforts at reconstructing their history, identity, and religion. The first assumption is that according to Elijah Muhammad, Islam is ‘the natural religion of the Black Nation. It is the nature in which we are made’ (E. Muhammad, 1965:80). Further, ‘Islam is righteousness and he who would believe in it and do the Will of Allah (God) must be by nature one born of Allah. The only people born is the Black Nation of which the so-called Negroes are descendants. Islam is actually our religion by nature’ (E. Muhammad, n.d;51) (see Chapter IV).

The second assumption is related to a controversy surrounding the unfortunate historical experience of the AAs, slavery. Although it is difficult to give the exact number of Muslims among slaves brought to the New World, various African-American Muslim (AAM) communities, both conventional and unconventional, particularly the NOI and its splinter groups, claim that a significant number of their ancestors were Muslims (Winters, 1976; Alford, 1977; Austin, 1984; A. Muhammad, 1984; Rashad, 1991;

Nyang, 1993). For the AAs, becoming Muslim and joining the NOI and similar movements was perceived as 'to unite with their own kind' (Essien-Udom, 1970:185), their ancestors and peoples in Africa and the East.

By becoming Muslim they re-established psychological, historical, cultural and religious ties with their own kind in Africa where Islam had spread from Arabia centuries before. The NOI's distinctive religio-nationalist teachings helped to revive AAs' historical and cultural heritage and ethnic, racial and genetic memories of their past, including religion and identity. Hence, they assisted them to reconstruct and reclaim their 'lost' or 'stolen' religion and identity. Elijah Muhammad constantly referred to these issues in his writings and speeches in order to boost and reverse the sense of belonging, psychology, history, identity and religion of the ancestors of AAs (E. Muhammad, 1965, 1974). More importantly, he proudly talked about their glorious past history, civilisation and achievements. These kinds of tactics and teachings boosted the oppressed people's feelings, those that were searching for self-worth, value and esteem, history and identity. In Heirich's words, for AAs to become Muslim and join the NOI was a fundamental change in their 'sense of ultimate grounding' and 'sense of root reality' (1977:673-74). Therefore, in returning to their original identity, history and ancestral faith, they tend to describe their religious experience as reversion rather than conversion, confirming the two assumptions of the NOI set out above. Danièle Hervieu-Leger's argument that religion as a memory passes from generation to generation seems to be appropriate in accounting for the NOI's assumptions. She contends that the feeling of belonging and the process of religious identification 'depends on the group or individual being conscious of sharing with others a stock of references to the past and a remembered experience to hand down to future generations' (Hervieu-Leger, 1994:125; 1993). In this process 'a specific mode of believing' and 'a particular way of organising meanings and practices' (Davie, 1996:109) gradually emerges. In the case of AAMs in general, and the NOI members in particular, becoming Muslim appears to have formed a distinctive way of 'believing', religious truths and practices moulded and patterned by their historical and contextual experiences: slavery, segregation, socio-economic discrimination and difficulties and the struggle for equality and freedom. Of course, the

particular pattern of beliefs and practices of their religion, Islam, were considerably remote from that of mainstream Islam.

Becoming Muslim was also reckoned by the NOI's members to establish emotional, ethnic, racial and religious connections with their own people's history, religion and identity. E. Muhammad often stressed that when Black men in America become Muslim they could become a part of the Black Asiatic Nation, People and Muslims in Africa and the East (E. Muhammad, 1957, 1965, 1974). The informants' accounts in my sample clearly explain why their experience is interpreted as reversion. Over half of the respondents, 54 out of 104, indicated that one of their four reasons for joining the NOI was its religious teaching and teaching of their history. Thirteen out of these 54 respondents related their becoming a member of the NOI to their history and Africa. Eighteen informants, including 2 who were born in the NOI, reported that they always felt Muslims by nature, God-conscious and good people. To join the NOI and to become Muslim they had just reverted to their ancestors' faith and 'natural religion'. The following accounts from my informants explicitly show their reversion experiences. A 56 year old housewife emotionally related her experience to the history of the Black people.

Becoming a Muslim I understood much, much more. Became aware of the vast world of my people in Africa and the East I am connected to (Respondent # 30).

A 57 year old taxi driver indicated how becoming Muslim had reversed his understanding of the past.

Becoming Muslim and follower of the Honourable Elijah Muhammad opened up my mind to my people's history, civilization and developments that we'd never been taught and told in the white education system. Brother, this Islam is everything, All Praise due to Allah (Interview, D. Saboor Adil, 1995, verbatim).

A 70 year old retired male Muslim official and a 49 year old female day care worker's comments refer to the history of their lost religion, Islam.

It was the religion of my ancestors who were brought here in slavery. Becoming Muslim I reclaimed our stolen and lost religion and knowledge of self (Respondent # 36).

Islam is the original religion of our forefathers in Africa and people in the East. When I became Muslim I felt I returned to my roots (Respondent # 80).

The most interesting accounts are those of two Muslim leaders, one the head of a local Islamic Centre and Arabic teacher at a college and the other the leader of a nation-wide Islamic movement, the biggest and most popular faction of the NOI. While the former joined the transition from the old NOI to mainstream Islam, the latter maintained the movement's old Black Nationalist teachings, beliefs and agenda. However, their accounts present a similar stance on reversion. The former comments:

Well I guess we understand that we're all born Muslims. I was a Muslim all my life. I grew up a Muslim, I was not converted to Islam, but reverted. All my life I've been a Muslim (Interview, Imam Darnel Karim, 1996, verbatim).

The latter's explanations are no different from the former's in terms of their content, though they belong to different religious groupings which have opposing views as far as beliefs and agenda are concerned.

Although I can't say I was quite a Saint but I was a very good young person. And God was always on my mind as a young person. But as a Christian I was looking in God, in Jesus. But I could see all the suffering and oppression of my people by so-called Christians. And so I began an earnest search. And so I accepted Islam. And I thank Allah so much for the day that I heard Elijah Muhammad and accepted the message of Islam and began this 40 year experience. (Interview, Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

Further, Minister Farrakhan accounts for his becoming Muslim as referring to the Prophet Muhammad's hadith, which says that 'all children are born upon the nature of religion, Islam. But later their parents and environments make them Jewish, Christian and pagan'. He says that,

It was exactly what happened to me, I'm Muslim by birth. I don't like the word conversion. The Qur'an and the Prophet say that we're by nature Muslims. So all I did was, accept what God has given to me from birth. And accepting my own religion which is Islam and then attempting to be a real Muslim which is a struggle in the context of America (Interview, Minister Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

The above accounts indicate that when AAs become Muslim and join Black Islamic movements and groups such as the NOI, they tend to establish a connection with their history, past and experience. They emotionally and nostalgically reclaim 'the lost' and 'the stolen' or 'the robbed' (E. Muhammad, 1965, 1974) history, religion and racial and ethnic identities that had just lived in their memories and the past experiences of their forefathers. In that sense, Islam seemed to have stayed dormant in the cultural genes of their ancestors, but with the rise of Black religio-nationalist and Islamic movements in the twentieth century it was awakened. AAs retrieved their religious and historical

memories and heritage by feeling attached to a culture, history and religion outside America. However, their attempts to revitalise that memory and heritage of the past seem to be reconstructed and imaginary although there is some historical fact in their claims.

6.2. The NOI's Recruitment Strategies, Networks and Grounds

In Chapter V, I partly discussed the NOI's socio-spatial and demographic conditions of recruitment grounds: the movement has developed differential recruitment strategies, networks and grounds over the years in order to reach out to the Black masses. The primary aim of the official recruitment strategy of the NOI was 'to recruit the "Negro in the mud" into the movement' (Essien-Udom, 1970:182). Accordingly, unlike the majority of NRMs, the movement's recruitment efforts were particularly targeted and focused on a specific race and ethnicity, the AAs. The NOI sought recruits through a variety of means whenever possible, recognising the importance of differential recruitment strategies.

6.2.1. Recruitment Strategies and the NOI's Attractions

The recruitment phenomenon does not happen randomly. Rather, to make contact with prospective recruits requires developing well-devised recruitment strategies on the part of social and religious organisations (Rochford, 1982, 1985). But sociologists in general, and sociologists of religion in particular, maintain that recruitment strategies emanate from the different patterns of social and religious organisations. Researchers of social movements largely see these strategies as deriving from the movement's ideology (Wilson, 1973; Freeman, 1979). Yet, as reviewed in Chapter IV, some sociologists maintain that such strategies are also affected by the organisational structure of a movement (Zald and Ash, 1966; Gerlach and Hine, 1970; Bromley and Shupe, 1979). Moreover, Beckford (1975b) and, later, Snow *et al* (1980) suggest that there is a strong correlation between the organisational structure of a religious movement and its recruitment performance and recruitment strategy. Snow *et al*, for example, argue that,

Movements requiring exclusive participation by their members in movement activities will attract members primarily from public places rather than from among extramovement interpersonal associations and networks. Movements which do not require exclusive participation by their members in movement activities will attract members primarily from among extramovement interpersonal associations and networks, rather than from public places (1980:796).

For the case of the NOI during over 40 years of Elijah Muhammad's leadership, it is possible to see all the above elements and influences in its recruitment strategies and tactics. And it is also possible to observe from my informants' responses and accounts the way that the movement's recruitment strategies and methods have evolved and how new strategies were added and adopted over the years. As an ethno-religious, religio-political and nationalist movement the NOI used a variety of means, such as its ideology, organisational structure, practical programmes and teachings and agendas in order to reach out to and make contact with their prospective recruits, AAs. Furthermore, the most impressive aspects of the movement were its members' distinctive ways of dressing, their uniform, clean appearance, respectful manners and the use of language; these were used as recruitment tactics to present the NOI and its believers in a very positive light to attract outsiders, particularly the people on the streets in Black neighbourhoods.

From the early years of the NOI (from the 1930s to the middle of the 1950s) it was difficult for the movement to develop effective recruitment strategies and networks due to its internal problems: power struggles, personal conflicts, infighting and splits (see Chapter III and Beynon, 1938; Sahib, 1951). During this period the NOI's recruitment strategies were confined to the Black ghettos of northern industrial cities where the majority of residents were newly arrived migrants from the South. The movement used elementary recruitment methods such as mythical teachings, members' informal interpersonal relations and limited organisational structures and programmes to attract new recruits. From the late-1950s onwards, however, the NOI has devised and developed much better recruitment tactics for making contact with and attracting the Black masses. The following are some features that the NOI has used effectively as recruitment strategies.

The first and foremost element that the movement used for attraction was its Black nationalistic ideology and objectives. It has focused on the history of Blacks, their significant past and contribution to civilisation, and their origins, divine nature, self and identity. Besides these and more importantly, it has taken specifically a critical and militant stance towards their unfortunate historical experience in the USA the slavery; and also on radical and revolutionary political objectives for the liberation of Blacks, separation, and strong opposition and criticism of the established system, its policies and the nature of White people.

The second most important recruitment tactic that the movement has used are its practical economic programmes and self-help, self-sufficiency, do for yourself policies which have been relatively successful in comparison with other Black organisations (E. Muhammad, 1965, 1973, 1974).

The third recruitment strategy is the movement's presentation of itself as having strong organisation, strong leadership, unity, a strong atmosphere of brotherhood-sisterhood, and a bold stance to protect the rights and lives of AAs.

Finally and perhaps the most obvious and impressive element is the NOI's presentation of itself: its distinctive dress codes with uniforms for both male and female members, the dignity and discipline they present, the language that members use, and the respect, treatment and status given to the Black women. Apart from these fundamental strategies that have derived from both ideological and organisational patterns, the NOI has devised recruitment strategies that have targeted public places such as places of entertainment where the movement's members readily come into contact with young Blacks. These tactics were mostly developed (as discussed in Chapter III) from the late-1950s onwards. Lincoln very aptly describes the movement's effective and practical recruitment methods.

In pursuit of his goal to make Black Muslims out of Black Christians, Muhammad has an ambitious programme of recruitment. His ministers go into jail and penitentiaries, pool halls and bars, barbershops and drugstores to talk about Islam. They invade the college campuses, the settlement houses, and YMCAs. Young Muslim brothers hawk their newspapers along with insistent invitations to attend lectures at the Muslim Temples. They speak from street corners and in parks, and they distribute literature wherever large crowds of Blacks may be gathered.

Invariably, the proselytisers are young, personable, urbane, and well-dressed men of confidence and conviction (Lincoln, 1973: 116).

To reach out to the Black masses the NOI developed new strategies from the late-1950s onwards first using the Black press and later creating its own media organs (Essien-Udom, 1970). The movement began holding its annual big gathering, convention or 'Saviour's Day' and organising public rallies, speaking engagements in Black neighbourhoods, colleges and actively participating in Black social and cultural events. Consequently, these recruitment tactics were reflected in changes in recruitment networks and grounds along with the NOI's organisational development.

The following accounts and responses of my informants clearly show their impressions and feelings towards the NOI and its members when they encountered them for the first time, and reflect the features of the movement described above. Sometimes a single aspect and sometimes several aspects of the movement impressed them. The most interesting point is, though, that the focus of their first impression varies according to their gender. While the majority of male respondents' first impressions and attraction centred on the NOI's nationalistic and political ideology, militant stance and strong organisational aspects, the majority of female respondents' first impressions focused on the respect, treatment and dignified status given to Black women and family values. The overwhelming majority of my informants, 90 out of 104 (86%) reported that their first impressions of the NOI and its members were positive. Eight respondents (7%) said that their first feelings towards the NOI were critical or mixed and, at the beginning, they did not take the movement seriously. The 6 remaining informants stated that they did not like and were not impressed by the movement because of its militant stance. These six informants included one male who joined in the early 1970s and 5 females, all of whom except one, joined in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Those respondents who were critical of the NOI were professionals and students at colleges in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Although they liked the NOI's organisational structure, they did not feel convinced by its mythical teachings and simplistic programmes.⁽¹⁾

The following are some accounts from my informants indicate that their impressions of the NOI's ideology, programmes, and organisational structures. For example, the comment of a 45 year old male Muslim, who joined the NOI at the peak of the Black

Power movements in the late 1960s, reflects the central and core teachings of the movement which is the superiority and priority of the Black race in creation and nature.

I like the teachings of Black man was first in the creation, was divine superior. I like also the discipline of the members of the Nation of Islam (Respondent # 19).

A 57 year old self-employed Muslim male's account also points to the Black nationalistic stance of the NOI's ideology.

The concept that white man was the Devil, that played a great part to make me become interested in the Nation of Islam. I was so impressed by the Nation's strong organisational aspects like unity (Respondent # 26).

An Imam's remarks of his first impressions about the NOI reflect the movement's political and militant posture towards the establishment.

I think it was more political, solidarity as well, I guess. I saw a unity of our people, you know. We did not have that type of unity among non-Muslim African-Americans. And also I saw the militancy, see it was militant. That was another thing that really impressed me, you know. Because I don't know that aspect of it, confrontational aspect that the honourable Elijah Muhammad was doing against the government and society was something that really appealed to me (Imam Murad B. Deen, 1997, verbatim).

The comments of a 47 year old Imam from a local Masjid were similar to those of the Imam above.

They [the NOI members] appeared very militant, confident, unafraid of white folks. They wanted POWER and took it (Interview, Imam Sultan Saladin, 1995, verbatim).

But another Muslim male professional's statements point out that both the movement's ideology and economic programmes and achievements impressed him deeply.

A member of the Nation had spoken and introduced to me the idea, ideology. And I was very much impressed with businesses, supermarkets, and restaurants. So and we were all ready, many of my friends and myself all were thinking nationalistic, Black nationalism. We were already in that frame of mind, cultural consciousness of African American people, except this was like a step forward. This was something that we all wanted to go for (Interview, Imam Rabbani Mubashir, 1995, verbatim).

As seen from the above accounts of my informants, the ideology and militancy of the NOI was used as a strategy to attract prospective recruits. Their statements also show that the movement's nationalistic and political ideology and militancy mainly attracted male members. Prior to my findings, Essien-Udom (1970) and Howard (1965) also noticed that the movement's ideology was a main source of attraction. Howard, for

example, found that 14 out of 19 of his informants were attracted to the NOI because of its ideology, Black Nationalism and militancy (1965:61).

However, the NOI's organisational structure, programmes and members' conduct and practices were more influential than ideology, and they were often used as a recruitment strategy to impress and attract the Black masses. The responses of my informants clearly display how these aspects of the movement's strategy were effective in recruitment. A 45 year old female medical doctor's account reflects the conduct of NOI members.

I was very impressed with Muslims' industrious enterprises and courteous manners like the way of their speaking and respect for females (Respondent # 5).

A 44 year old male Muslim community activist and publisher's comments focus on the external positive presentation of the NOI.

I was impressed by the cleanliness, sincerity and honesty of its members (Respondent # 11).

A 47 year old male auto mechanic's impressions cover almost all the organisational patterns and practices of the movement's members.

Very, very impressed with the unity, brotherly love, clean living, economic success, self-confidence, hope, strong challenge to racism etc. (Respondent # 28).

A male account manager of a company indicates that the role model that NOI members presented made a great impact on Black people.

They were clean-cut, hard workers and their character was above average (Respondent # 18).

The next two accounts from two Muslim male academics present almost identical characteristics of the NOI which gave a positive impression.

Love and respect due to its programmes of self-help, self-love, unity and God-consciousness (Respondent # 4).

Very positive the Muslims' clean and responsible life styles, disciplined and organised group (Respondent # 6).

As can be seen from the above statements, organisational structure and practical programmes and the members of a religious movement strongly influence its recruitment strategy in attracting prospective recruits. The NOI officials paid great

attention to and were very extremely meticulous about Muslims' appearances, cleanliness, uniforms and politeness (Sahib, 1951). A 58 year old male academic who joined the NOI in the late 1950s refers to the importance of the member's role and the strict rules of the movement.

When Muslims were doing dawah activities and representing the Nation they had to get dressed in uniforms, clean-cut and pay attention to their manners and language (Interview, Dr A. Shabazz, 1995a, paraphrased).

The NOI as a religious movement used its external features to impress the Black masses more effectively and successfully than the other Black religio-nationalist movements. Interestingly enough, the above accounts are mostly given by male members. The attractions and impressions formed on the first encounter with the NOI members vary according to the gender status of my informants in particular, and the majority of Muslims in general. That is, the majority of my female informants' accounts centred on, as I said earlier, the priorities and dignified status given to Black women by the NOI, such as being treated with respect, protection, the way they are addressed by male members of the NOI and family values. Almost identical responses to the attractions of the NOI members for females were found by West's (1994) study of the role of female members in the 1960s. She found that the major appeal and attraction of the NOI to her sample focused largely on these factors. My findings for the female respondents in my sample drew parallel results to those of West. A 70 year old retired female, who described her job prior to joining the movement as a prostitute, said that,

Respect and love showed to Black women by the members of NOI played a great part in making me become Muslim. Some of them knew my past but it did not matter. I had never seen and experienced an acceptance as a sister and a person with such sincerity and warm environment as shown by brothers and sisters in the Nation (Respondent # 17).

A 56 year old Muslim female⁽³⁾ educator who had recently moved from the South to the North narrates her first personal encounter with the NOI Muslims, reflecting not only the female appearance but also the language.

The first time I ever experienced a NOI person was in the late 1960s in Chicago at one of the Nation's restaurants. I was so impressed by how the women looked. They were not only beautiful but the striking feature, the dignity exhibited by women in the Nation, the way they dressed, they did not have their hair pressed or straightened. They reminded me of some of my southern counterparts back in Montgomery, just stunning and impressive Black features and their natural selves. As they waited for me to get my order of food, they kept saying 'yes mam' as this really is a southern tradition and they were so clean and disciplined. I asked my friend

'who are these people' and she said 'these are Black Muslims'. I had never heard of such people before (Interview # 9, paraphrased).

The other Muslim female professional, whose husband was imprisoned and sentenced to death at the tender age of 24 years, discusses how the NOI's policies towards Black women appealed to her most.

Love, protection and respect for women in the 1960s attracted me to become a follower of the Hon. Elijah Muhammad. I speak for myself and the women in the Nation. For the women I suppose it was more of the protection and respect that they got. The respect and protection they got from brothers. The motto in the 1960s was 'Love Your Black Woman, Protect Your Black Women'. The Hon. Elijah Muhammad used to remind the believers all the time saying 'a nation can rise no higher than its women'. That was such respect and protection the Black women got (Interview, Zubaydah Madyun, 1996, paraphrased).

The following account of a 44 year old female journalist covers almost all the impressive, and appealing aspects of the movement.

it was for me, it was the dignity exhibited by men and women, the way that the women carried themselves, the way they dressed, the way they were treated by men as a kind of respect and status. Actually, the women were given the highest status in terms of their values in the community. They're treated and protected like the Queen Mother.

Besides the appealing aspects of the movement that relate to women she further mentions other attractive features of the NOI at that time compared with other Black Power movements,

There was the economic movement, do for yourself, and economic programmes. And there also was that militaristic aspect, because there were other organisations at the same time like the Black Panthers that there you could compare them with something like the NOI. You always felt that the NOI had a total package, the Panthers could be almost described as just being angry. But the NOI was channelling that package into a more concrete programme⁽⁴⁾ (Interview, Aisha Mustapha, 1999, verbatim).

The NOI's policies were beneficial for those AAs who had experienced severe social problems, self-identity crises, socio-economic hardships, deprivation, segregation and low social status. The movement provided alternatives by using its own distinctive ideological and organisational characteristics and practical programmes. The notion of respect and protection for Black women became a significant magnetic feature of the NOI especially as far as female members were concerned. As can be seen from the above accounts, although the movement's appeal varies according to gender both male and female members point out not only single aspects but various patterns of the movement, teachings, organisational structure and programmes and the role of members. The multi-faceted attraction of the movement is also shown by my

informants' responses to another question in the survey questionnaire. Table 6.2 shows which aspects of the NOI appealed to or attracted them. Organisational and ideology

Table 6.2. What Aspects of the NOI appealed to you? (1946-1975)

a) Organisational	22
b) Teachings/Ideology	20
c) Programmes/Policies/Agendas	37
d) All of the above	25

issues attracted the respondents more or less equally, 21% and 19% respectively. It is interesting to note that 25 respondents indicated that all aspects of the NOI appealed to them, without excluding anything. But the most salient outcome is, as I have argued earlier, the movement's practical programmes such as economics and the appearances and conducts of members were more effective in attracting the attention of prospective recruits. A 37 year old Muslim male journalist explains the prominent impact that members have.

All of the above important factors but most importantly clean and decent appearance of the Nation's Muslims were so persuasive (Interview # 8, verbatim).

A Muslim academic's comments also refer to the role of members in recruitment.

By setting a good example of hard work, Black pride on display, God-conscious deportment or active dawah via deeds, etc (Dr A. Shabazz, 1995a, verbatim).

The attraction and appeal of the NOI will be explored further through my informants' answers to another survey question concerning the four most important reasons and motives for their joining the movement. Of course, the appeal and attraction of the NOI seem to be closely related to the themes of recruitment networks and grounds and how and through which channels people encounter and hear of the movement and its members. These features will be examined next.

6.2.2. Recruitment Networks, Grounds and Interaction

It is important to stress that the ways in which the NOI has made and followed up contacts with potential recruits have varied just as recruitment strategies have with the historical and organisational development of the movement. A close scrutiny of

recruitment as it occurred reveals the essential role played by interpersonal social ties between NOI members and potential recruits. The Lofland-Stark conversion process model (1965) gave an important place to the factors of 'cult affective bonds' and 'intensive interaction' for recruitment. Since then several sociologists of religion have maintained that these factors play a prominent role in recruiting people to NRMs. When such pre-existing social ties between members and non-members do exist and develop, it is likely that prospective recruits do join the movement. When such social relations do not exist and develop then it is highly conceivable that the recruitment of potential recruits to a movement would not occur (Gerlach and Hine, 1970; Bibby and Brinkerhoff, 1974; Harrison, 1974; Lynch, 1977; Snow *et al.*, 1980; Stark and Bainbridge, 1980). However, this proposition is not always sufficient to understand the recruitment process. Balch and Taylor (1977) and Seggar and Kunz (1982), for example, did not find that the pre-existence of social ties were an important feature in recruitment to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and the UFO cult respectively. Balch and Taylor's contention is very interesting in interpreting the NOI recruitment network of AAs. They contend that 'the seeker lives in a social milieu' that 'consists of a loosely integrated network of seekers who drift from one philosophy to another in search of metaphysical truth' (1977:850).

As discussed in Chapter V the majority of my informants were involved in and sometimes actively participated in, and sometimes emotionally supported, various religio-nationalistic and political movements prior to their affiliation with the NOI. They were seeking and shifting from one group to another in the socio-political and cultural framework of Black urban neighbourhoods (Sahib, 1951; Essien-Udom, 1970). The overwhelming number of NOI members in my sample in Elijah Muhammad's period also lived in Black neighbourhoods (Beynon, 1938; Sahib, 1951). The seekers were, in this case, nationalistic and racially conscious people, in the socio-spatial conditions of the Black ghettos and the NOI's teachings made sense to them. If they define joining as the logical extension of their, mostly nationalistic and identity quests, it is easy to understand how they could join the movement 'without first establishing social ties with those who already belonged' (Balch and Taylor, 1977:847). This was the case for a significant number of my informants.

Before moving on to analyse the data obtained about the NOI's recruitment networks, it is worth citing here Beckford's findings of his study on the recruitment channels of the Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) in Britain (1975a, 1975b). His findings are useful in understanding my informants' recruitment patterns to the NOI. Beckford argues that the role of pre-existing social relations have been exaggerated. And more importantly, he contends that the carefully prepared and rehearsed 'door-step' interaction between an 'evangelist' and 'householder' seems to have a relatively more effective role than previous social ties in recruitment to the JW (1975b:906). In Beckford's findings the roles of both kinship relations and 'door-step sermons' contributed almost equally to conversion, contributing 46% and 44% respectively (1975a: 160-61).

Until the mid-1950s, the NOI recruitment channels were much like those of large numbers of other NRMs such as the ISKCON (Rochford, 1982, 1985) and the UC (Barker, 1984; Stark and Bainbridge, 1980). Nevertheless, with its organisational development, increase of membership and the spread of its popularity beyond the boundary of Black neighbourhoods through press and media coverage (Lincoln, 1973; Essien-Udom, 1970) from the late 1950s onwards the NOI's customary proselytising tactics, networks and grounds began changing. Earlier studies of the NOI found that 'social' or 'socio-political' milieus were important for recruitment to the movement because the majority of early members were newly arrived migrants living in Black ghettos who joined the movement without pre-existing social ties, except for shared features like race, colour and socio-economic deprivation (Beynon, 1938; Sahib, 1951). However, from the late 1950s and particularly from the early 1960s pre-existing social relations such as kinship and friendship have been effective in recruitment to the NOI (Essien-Udom, 1970; Howard, 1965; Abilla, 1977). But my survey of the NOI's members during the Elijah Muhammad period revealed not only that social network ties and social milieu or encounters in public places in Black neighbourhoods have been crucial in recruiting AAs to the NOI but also how these differential recruitment patterns have changed over the years. Table 6.3 shows that the largest group, one third of my informants (32%) encountered the NOI and its members through pre-existing social network ties such as relatives and friends.

The second largest group of respondents, just under one third, heard of the movement through its members in the Black neighbourhoods. The other significant group, 24

Table 6.3. Through which channels did you encounter and hear of the NOI and its members? (1946-1975)

	From 1946 to the early 1960s	From the early 1960s to 1975	Total:
a) Members in the Black neighbourhood	19	11	30
b) Friends and Relatives (husband-wife, brother-sister, co-workers and friends at work and in the neighbourhood)	12	22	34
c) NOI members' activities (rallies, speaking engagements, and selling the Nation's products like bean pie, paper in Black neighbourhood)	9	15	24
d) Media/printed materials	1	6	7
e) Others (in correctional centers and prisons)	5	4	9
Total	46	58	104

respondents, encountered the movement through its activities in public places - the same recruitment pattern used by ISKCON (Rochford, 1985, 1982) and the UC (Barker, 1984). Considering the latter two recruitment patterns (52%) reveals that the respondents heard of the NOI and its members as a result of the movement's 'carefully prepared and rehearsed' (Beckford, 1975b) face to face interactions in Black neighbourhoods. It also displays the movement's well organised recruitment strategy, what they called 'Group Fishing' (Essien-Udom, 1970). This involved mostly male FOI members being active in public places such as bars, pool halls, drug stores, street corners etc. in densely populated Black areas, hoping to make contact with potential recruits. The other two recruitment patterns in Table 6.3 are via the media and prison. As pointed out earlier, the NOI from the mid-1950s began to reach out to the Black masses using the Black press such as the *Pittsburg Courier*, *Los Angeles Herald-Dispatch* etc (Essien-Udom, 1970; Lincoln, 1973). However, from 1959 onwards the mainstream media gave huge coverage of the movement and it became known on a nation-wide scale (see Chapter I). Elijah Muhammad and his officials gave great emphasis to inmates in prisons since he personally noticed while he was serving prison

sentences in the early 1940s that prisons were fertile recruitment grounds for AAs to the NOI.

Table 6.3 also shows how recruitment patterns varied over time. Prior to the early 1960s the social milieus of Black neighbourhoods were important sources of recruitment. From the early 1960s although they remained fertile grounds new recruitment grounds and tactics were introduced along the lines of the organisational development of the NOI, such as networks of relatives and friends, the movement's social and cultural activities and the launching of its own publications, newspapers and tape circulation. These changes suggest that as a movement develops, its relations with the surrounding society change and then the movement establishes itself and becomes institutionalised (Parenti, 1964; Wilson, 1973; Zald, 1970). The above figures reflect almost identical patterns to those of the responses given to a survey question about how members became involved and interested in the movement's teachings and programmes.

Table 6.4 shows that a large number of respondents, 40%, became interested in the

Table 6.4. How did you become involved and interested in the teachings and programmes of the NOI? (1946-1975)

	From 1946 to the early 1960s	From the early 1960s to 1975	Total
a) Through invitations by the NOI's members to meetings, activities, and programmes of the movement	25	17	42
b) Through friends and relatives' introductions to the NOI's teachings and programmes	13	24	37
c) By attending meetings and activities of the NOI, self-interest	5	7	12
d) By reading and listening to movement literature; newspapers, books, tapes, etc.	3	10	13
Total	46	58	104

NOI's programmes and teachings as a result of face to face interaction or 'incidental witnessing' (Beckford, 1975a) in Black public places, where members sold the movements' products and publications to 'by-chancers' (Barker, 1984:96) of the Black crowds. There is, as indicated earlier, no doubt that in this sort of interaction in public places the members' invitations, external appearance, evidence of the tangible impact of the movement's teachings and programmes in changing their socio-economic situation, morality, manners etc. play an important role in convincing potential recruits. Those who became interested in the movement's teachings and programmes through reading the literature increased considerably in the later period. There seems to be a connection between this growth and the educational achievements of those who joined in the late 1960s and early 1970s (see Chapter V).

The other interesting finding from Table 6.4 is that 35% of respondents cited pre-existing social relations with members had engendered their interest in the NOI. This finding corroborates those of Harrison (1974), Heirich (1977) and Snow *et al* (1980) on the members of Catholic Pentecostalism and Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism respectively. Heirich, for example, found that those 'introduced to the movement by trusted associates' who were already converts represented a large majority of members. He concluded that this was because 'members of the movement, when recruiting, turn to previous friends and persons they meet daily' (1977:667). In the case of the NOI members in my sample, a significant number of them turned to their relatives and friends with whom they had pre-existing interpersonal ties. My informants' accounts below clearly show the different ways of joining the NOI. A 55 year old male accountant reveals the impact that the movement's speaking engagements and rallies had.

Malcolm X was the voice that vibrated the conscience of our folks in early 1960s (Respondent # 12).

A female educator refers to her husband's contact and introduction to the movement.

My husband met the Nation of Islam two years before me. He introduced me to the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's teachings and programmes (Respondent # 2).

A 48 year old female professional's first contact indicates the role of kinship.

There was a relative in the Nation. I became acquainted with Muslims, and even my relative was going to the Temple for meetings to hear the teachings of Honourable Elijah Muhammad and several times she invited me to go with her (Respondent # 80).

A 69 year old male who did odd jobs prior to joining the movement describes his first encounter which points to the social milieu of recruitment.

My initial contact with the Nation happened in the neighbourhood, young brothers were selling *Muhammad Speaks* (Respondent # 56).

A Muslim Imam's account points out the significance of friendship networks and of the social setting in recruitment.

Well, there was a member of the Nation in the neighbourhood. In 1968 or 1967 I was just out of High School. I have friends who were members of the Nation of Islam. So he was talking to me and speaking to me about the NOI, and showed me the Muslim newspaper which was called *Muhammad Speaks*. And I began to look at it and read that the content of paper that talk about the African Americans as we said that time 'Black People'. So I became Muslim through my friends and also through reading *Muhammad Speaks* (Interview, Imam R. Mubashir, 1995, verbatim).

A 58 year old mechanic's experience also indicates pre-existing social relations.

I have worked at several jobs where we worked side by side [Muslims] (Respondent # 18).

A university lecturer's first contact with the movement shows both the NOI's organisational impact and the context in which it has always been active.

My parents used a Muslim Nursery in our neighbourhood to care for my younger brother, because we heard that they were very successful in educating our Black children (Interview, Dr. Farid Muhammad, 1995, verbatim).

A self-employed taxi driver's comments show how effective the face to face interaction is for recruitment.

I want to tell you a story here brother. I was driving a cab at the time. I kept trying to get my friend who initially introduced me to Islam. Come on, and let's go to the Temple, let's go to the Temple but he was always reluctant [to go with me to the Temple]. One night while I was driving the cab, I picked up two sisters who said take me to 53rd Greenwood to Muhammad's Temple. And then I realized that they're Muslims and that's where they're going. At that particular night, they invited me and I went in that night and I joined at very night. That was in 1967 March, April somewhere around there. A wonderful night (Interview, D.S. Aadil, 1995, verbatim).

The following two respondents' first contact with the NOI show the variety of recruitment patterns. A 57 year old self-employed clothier says that,

I first heard about the teachings of Honorable Elijah Muhammad in 1958 through a newspaper, his column in the Pittsburg Courier. He was telling the truth (Respondent # 64).

A Muslim prison Imam remembers where he first heard of the NOI. His account reveals yet another way of recruiting.

My first introduction to the Nation was through TV. In 1963 my wife was watching a programme on TV, Malcolm X was on the programme. On Sunday, my wife called me, come on, come on, listen this programme. Malcolm oh boy, I've never heard of an African American speaks like that. One thing that I remember he said, Jesus is not God, Allah is God. That struck my mind, you know. I went out next day to get grocery. I saw there were some young brothers on the street corners selling *Muhammad Speaks*. I approached them and I started talking to one of them. And I've found out that he was a Minister in South Philadelphia for the Nation. He was very nice and intelligent brother. He began talking to me ... And that's got to be the real thing for me...(Interview, Imam Murad B. Deen, 1997, verbatim).

An interesting development happened in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the NOI began attracting college students. Here is a female professional's account of her initial contact with the movement.

My very first encounter was a white professor in Louisburg, PN I had an independent study course. He gave me the book by C. Eric Lincoln, a Black sociologist. He gave me the book and asked my opinion on it. That was my first reading on the NOI. The book itself gave me the history of the Nation what the community it brought me up to date. (Interview, Aisha Mustapha, 1999, verbatim).

As can be seen from the accounts of my informants, they encountered the NOI and its members through a variety of channels. These different contacts were used to raise their interest in the movement's ideology and programmes. More interestingly, these differential recruitment patterns have been used and devised according to the NOI's organisational development and institutionalisation process. The above variety of patterns were also reflected in the reactions of family, parents and friends towards their joining the movement, and the duration of their affiliation with it. However, there are other factors that affect the affiliation period, such as gender, age and educational level. These themes will be analysed next.

6.2.3. Reactions of Parents, Family and Friends to Recruitment to the NOI

Unlike the responses shown by parents, relatives and friends towards recruitment into most NRMs, my informants report positive reactions to their recruitment to the NOI in Elijah Muhammad's era. It has to be stressed, however, that the data obtained about my informants' parents, relatives and friends' responses to their affiliation with the NOI are not based on in-depth interviews as are other studies on recruitment to NRMs, such as

Beckford (1981, 1985) and Bromley *et al* (1982) but rather, are more retrospective than current experience.

Responses of families to their children's involvement with NRMs vary significantly according to their organisational features and public perception of the movements. The aforesaid works have examined the responses of recruits' families to the UC in the UK and the USA. Beckford (1981, 1985), for example, notes that the families of UC's members in the UK gave diverse responses to their children's affiliation with the movement. He finds that three types of responses were given: 'incomprehension', 'anger' and 'ambivalence' towards the movement and their recruitment. The most frequent responses, however, fall into the second type, anger. Moreover, he maintains that this specific response 'has virtually monopolised the accounts given in the mass-media of reactions to new religious movements; indeed, it has approximated the status of a stereotype' (1981:45) and the public influence of anti-cult organisations (Beckford, 1985; Shupe and Bromley, 1980).

The responses of parents, relatives and friends of the NOI's members in my sample do not show the same degree of negative reactions by their parents to their affiliation with the movement. Earlier studies on the NOI (Essien-Udom, 1970; Smith, 1984) reveal that both family members and friends of the recruits to the NOI responded in different ways, sometimes negatively, mixed or puzzled reactions and gradual acceptance. My informants' answers similarly reflect the diverse reactions of their family and friends. Tables 6.5 and 6.6 show that a significant number of the responses of family members and friends are positive, 35% and 38% respectively. When the 'progressive acceptance' responses are added to 'positive reactions' of family members and friends the response rate increases considerably to 53% and 54% respectively. There is no doubt that several factors had a role in influencing the responses of families and friends. First, as was analysed earlier, a significant number of my informants reported that they encountered the NOI and its members through relatives and friends (Gerlach and Hine, 1970; Snow *et al.*, 1980;; Stark and Bainbridge, 1980). Second, an equally significant factor was that their encounters with NOI members in the Black neighbourhoods seemed to have influenced their families and friends' responses to their affiliation with the movement.

Table 6.5. How did your parents and members of your family respond to your decision to become a member of the NOI? (1946-1975)

a) Negative	16
(did not like it, disappointed, very cold, not good, thought I was going crazy, foolish and being misled)	
b) Positive	37
(good, supportive, favorable, nice, accepted / respected, they were OK)	
c) Surprised	17
(puzzled, shocked, reserved, curious and could not understand and it was a passing fad)	
d) Mixed Responses (from parents and family members)	15
e) Progressive acceptance	19
(from negative and surprised reactions to slow acceptance and respect)	
Total	104

Table 6.6. How did your friends and colleagues react to your decision to become a member of the NOI? (1946-1975)

a) Negative	13
(did not like it, very cold, ridicule, thought I was crazy, pulled away, not good and etc.)	
b) Positive	40
c) Surprised / Curious	14
d) Neutral	7
(No problem, no difference, no reaction)	
e) Mixed responses (from friends' circles and colleagues at work place)	13
f) Progressive acceptance	17
(from negative and surprised reactions to slow acceptance and respect)	
Total:	104

For a long time families and friends had been familiar with how NOI teachings and programmes had substantially changed AAs' lives. The attitudes of families and friends corresponded with Balch and Taylor's words: 'the seeker is not disparaged as a starry-eyed social misfit. Instead, he is respected because he is trying to learn and grow' (1977:850).

The other phenomenon which can be seen from my data is the progressive acceptance and respect of family and friends after observing the positive changes in the informants' lives after their recruitment to the NOI. An other interesting development concerns family and friends' negative reactions. Prior to the early 1960s the number of negative reactions was quite low (family, 16; friends, 13). Later, however, the mainstream mass - media began publishing articles that portrayed the NOI as a 'hate group' and a 'Black supremacist movement' (J. Muhammad, 1993), these developments seem to have influenced their responses towards those who joined the movement. My informants' answers to the survey questionnaire and their accounts of family and friends' reactions towards their affiliation with the NOI display and explain the reasons for these different reactions. A 63 year old female who joined the NOI in the early 1960s and is currently a day-care worker explains her family's gradual acceptance.

Family members couldn't understand at the beginning. But later they tried to respect it as best they could. My friends asked a lot of questions (Respondent # 73).

A 49 year old male who works as a security guard also tells of the similar reactions he received.

They were quite puzzled, they did not quite understand. But they were not against it. Because after I've got involved in the Nation, they saw nice change in me as being a better person, cleaner, just a better guy all around.

For his friends' responses he said:

Well, the same as before. They didn't quite understand but they all accepted (Interview # 10).

A female medical professional's family members responded very differently to her joining the NOI.

Mother was favorable, but father with some scepticism. Other family members were also favorable because two of them, two brothers, were already in the Nation before me. Most of my friends' reactions were favorable as well (Respondent # 5).

However, a 56 year old female who was a homemaker at the time she joined the group recounts her parents and friends' negative responses.

They were very disappointed and disliked my ex-husband. Because they believed he forced me. My friends pulled away, disappointed. They did not want any part of it (Respondent # 30).

A male who was involved in the Black Power movement in the early 1970s explains the reactions he received from his family and friends. His account also reflects recruitment through the family network.

My father did not respond positively. After a period of uncertainty some of my brothers and sisters joined the Nation (Respondent # 28).

A 48 year old male who joined the movement while he was a student at college remembers his parents' surprised and his friends' neutral responses.

My family thought it was a passing fad. For my friend, no different - it was my choice (Respondent # 3).

However, the following accounts of my informants show their parents and friends' responses after seeing positive changes in them. A 55 year old university lecturer who joined the NOI when he was 19 years old states that,

My parents responded very positively because of the positive change they saw in my attitude and demeanour, Al-hamdulillah [Thanks God].

His friends' reactions reflect the role of pre-existing social ties in recruitment.

For the most part, very supportive. Within a year Allah blessed my dawah endeavors to induce over a dozen of my friends to become members (Interview, Dr A. Shabazz, 1995a, verbatim).

The case of a 47 year old carpenter's parents' and friends' reactions were mixed:

My mother was hurt and responded negatively. The rest of my family saw I was a better person so it was all right. Close friends had no problem with my joining the Nation. But one or two others seemed to resent it (Respondent # 40).

My next informant joined in the early 1960s right after increased media coverage of the NOI and currently works as a journalist. His experience reflects the mass media's role in influencing his parents' stance towards his joining the movement.

My parents had fallen away. Family members did not want me to become a member of the Nation. They said Muslims taught hate (Respondent # 101).

As can be seen from the above accounts of my informants' the responses of their parents and friends to their affiliation with the NOI were diverse. Their reactions also show that social networks such as relatives and friends, were important in recruitment to the movement. The length of time it took my informants to join varied and was affected by other factors such as gender, education and age levels. These will be examined next.

6.2.4. Duration of the Recruitment Process

It is difficult to say how long it takes nationalistically conscious people to join an ethno-religious movement through pre-existing social relations where the movement and seekers have co-existed side by side for a long time.

Recruitment to a religious movement does not always occur suddenly. It generally requires a long process of consideration and reasoning. For a specific religious movement whose teachings, programmes and strategies target a particular race, the recruitment process varies widely depending on other factors such as gender, education, age and time period. Table 6.7 shows that the NOI recruits in my sample took different

Table 6.7. How long did it take for you to join the NOI? (1946-1975)

a) Immediately just after my first visit to the Temple and introduction to the teachings of the NOI	36
b) Several days and weeks	29
c) More than a month	26
d) A couple of years	13
Total	104

lengths of time to join the movement. Those who made the decision to join the movement immediately after being introduced to it form the largest group, with 36 individuals (34%). This quick decision-making reveals the importance of recruitment networks, social ties and socio-cultural conditions. These factors are also reflected in the recruitment of those respondents who joined after several days and weeks, or after more than a month (27% and 25% respectively). It is interesting to note that the recruitment of 13 members took a couple of years. Several factors appeared to influence the length of subjects' decision-making process such as education, gender and age. Below Tables 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10 show these variations. Earlier works on recruitment to the NOI during Elijah Muhammad's era, noted the different durations of the recruitment process (Essien-Udom, 1970; Howard, 1965). However, they did not explore the factors that influenced that process. My findings indicate that the duration of the recruitment

Table 6.8. How long did it take for you to join the NOI? (By gender/periods) (1946-1975)

	From 1946 to the early 1960s		From the early 1960s to 1975		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
a) Immediately (just right after my first encounter with and introduction to the teachings of the NOI)	11	12	4	9	36
b) Several days and weeks	9	7	6	7	29
c) More than a month	5	0	14	7	26
c) A couple of years	2	0	7	4	13
Total	27	19	31	27	104

process varied according to gender, education, age and time period. Table 6.8 reveals that a significant number of female members joined the movement after a shorter time, 21 out of 46 immediately (45%), and 14 (30%) after several days or weeks, in comparison with male members (25% in both cases). Gender difference would seem to have an important role. However, as Rochford (1985:123) argues, numerous substantive studies of recruitment have failed to address the significance of gender in the recruitment process. He found that ISKCON female devotees joined the movement after different lengths of time. He further argues that this arises because male and female members of ISKCON 'have been recruited into the movement through different influence structures', males mostly being recruited in public places while females entered through social ties (1985:125). As was discussed earlier in the 'Recruitment Network' section, a large number of my sample join the NOI through introduction by friends and relatives. Female members, as is indicated in their accounts, were recruited to the NOI mostly through relatives: husband, brother-sister, and close kinship. Therefore, in the recruitment process of the female informants, the relations network was the major influence in their decision-making.

The findings reported in Table 6.9 also show that the duration of recruitment is influenced by age. Since the age issue has been analysed in detail in Chapter V, there is no need to repeat the same explanation here. The other important factor which influences the recruitment process and decision-making is the educational level. Educational level can play a significant role; it can either accelerate, facilitate or delay

Table 6.9 How long did it take for you to join the NOI? (By age distribution / periods)

From 1946 to the early 1960s					From the early 1960s to 1975				
	Immediately	Several days and weeks	More than a month	A couple of years	Immediately	Several days and weeks	More than a month	A couple of years	Total
a) Teenagers (13-19 years)	3	1	0	0	5	1	1	0	11
b) 20-25 years	5	2	2	1	4	6	8	7	35
c) 26-30 years	3	5	2	1	2	2	7	2	24
d) 31-35 years	4	1	1	0	1	2	4	2	15
e) 36-40 years	5	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	7
f) 41-45 years	2	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	5
g) 46 and over	2	3	0	0	1	1	0	0	7
Total	23	15	6	2	13	14	20	11	104

Table 6.10 How long did it take for you to join the NOI? (By educational levels/periods)

	From 1946 to the early 1960s				From the early 1960s to 1975				
	Immediately	Several days and weeks	More than a month	A couple of years	Immediately	Several days and weeks	More than a month	A couple of years	Total
1) Elementary School	10	5	0	0	1	1	0	0	17
2) High School Drop out	4	3	0	0	2	1	0	0	10
3) High School	9	7	3	0	8	7	4	1	39
4) Some College	0	0	2	2	2	4	11	3	24
5) College/University	0	0	1	0	0	1	4	6	12
6) Graduate	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Total:	23	15	6	2	13	14	20	11	104

the prospective recruit's joining a movement and making a full commitments towards it. In this process, the movement's teachings, programmes and objectives are crucial elements as can be seen in my informants' recruitment processes. Table 6.10 shows how my informants' recruitment processes varied with their educational level as well as over time. The educational variable is an important factor because it influences a member's process of recruitment to a movement. The subjects' educational levels in my sample were discussed earlier in Chapter V. Prior to the early 1960s the educational levels of the majority of NOI members was either elementary, high school drop-outs or high school graduates and their recruitment to the movement took a very short time, 23 out of 46 (50%) immediately, and 15 (32%) several days or weeks later. In the later period this proportion changed slightly but not radically. From the early 1960s onwards, 20 out of 58 (34%) primary school, high school drop-outs and graduates joined the NOI after a short length of time. If we add up these two time periods together, more than half of my informants (55%) for the Elijah Muhammad period joined the NOI in a short time, immediately or after several days and weeks.

However, from the early 1960s to 1975 a new recruitment process emerged, that is, gradual affiliation, which can last from a few months to a couple of years. The majority of those who reported that joining the NOI after first encountering it took months or years, were college and university students or graduates, 26 out of 33. The main reasons given for the variation in my informants' recruitment time are as follows.

First, elementary and high school graduates are more likely than college graduates to believe without questioning the NOI's beliefs and programmes. While the NOI's mythical and millenarian teachings, like Yakub's story, the divine nature of Black, Asiatic man, the fall of America, etc. (E. Muhammad, 1965, 1973), were believable to elementary and high school graduates, they were subjected to criticism and were found less convincing by college graduates, though they sympathised with the movement's practical and effective programmes in the interest of Black people. During almost all of his leadership Elijah Muhammad emphasised the demise of White people and the battle of Armageddon where White and Black people clash with each other, and eventually the Black race wins the battle and restores order, righteousness and justice to the world. He

also predicted the fall of America for her crimes against Black people. He sometimes emphatically urged the Blacks to join and support the NOI's programmes and teachings in order to reverse and transform the AAs' conditions and offer them salvation, liberation and upliftment before the end of the White world (E. Muhammad, 1965, 1973). These kinds of mythical beliefs and simple and utopian promises made sense to those whose education levels were relatively low, but not to the better educated prospective recruits. This tactic makes an impact on prospective recruits. Beckford argues that 'the degree of urgency and spiritual effervescence affects the would be member. Many NRMs are animated by a driving sense of urgency and importance of their mission, especially those which set out to transform the world' (1985:110).

Second, are the NOI's unrealistic policies on, for example, political absentism and separatism (see Chapter III). Politically and nationalistically inclined college students and graduates found that the movement's political stance and objectives were not effective. While the majority of elementary and high schools graduates heard of the NOI and its members through their social milieu, friends and relatives, a large number of college students and graduates encountered the movement at campuses, in cultural events during their studies. The accounts of my informants explain the reasons why their affiliation with the NOI either took a long or short time and how this reflected their educational level. For example, a 71 year old elementary school male graduate, who was working in a shoe repair and shine shop when he joined the movement in 1955, remembers that,

There was a wonderful brother who was follower of the Hon. Elijah Muhammad in our neighborhood. He used to come very often to the shop and talk about teachings of the Messenger Muhammad. One day he invited me to go to the Temple. I think it was on Sunday. So I did. After hearing the message I wanted to join. Because he was saying the truth (Respondent # 50).

A high school graduate working as a painter also joined the NOI immediately.

Immediately, after just one meeting. It was an inspiring night that I joined the Nation after my first visit to the Temple. It was the message I was searching for (Respondent # 39).

A 57 year old high school graduate clothier also joined the NOI in short a time.

I first heard about Muslims in 1963 during a debate between a Christian Minister and Muslim Minister. That's struck my mind. I went out next day and asked their next meeting. The night I visited the Temple I decided to join (Respondent # 64).

A 55 year old female who did odd jobs recounts her first encounter with the NOI and how it affected her decision.

I was walking on the streets when I met a brother selling *Muhammad Speaks*. He was so respectful, he called 'yes mam' and 'yes sister'. That brother invited me to come Sunday Temple public service ... I had never seen that kind of respectful treatment as a sister (Respondent # 71).

But it is not always the case that people whose educational achievements are low joined the movement immediately or in a short time. There are several respondents in my sample who are high school drop-outs, high school graduates or had taken some college courses who took a long time to join the NOI. A 55 year old male Muslim prison minister, for example, was a high school graduate when he joined the movement. It took him over two years. Despite first hearing about the NOI in 1963 on TV when Malcolm X was on the programme, he only joined the movement in the year following his assassination in 1965 (Interview, Imam Murad B. Deen, 1997).

The accounts of college students and graduates in this study reflect their criticism of some teachings and policies of the NOI: because of this it took them quite a long time to join the movement. For example, a 56 year old female educator who joined the group in the early 1970s tells of her initial reactions to the NOI.

I think I went to one meeting once, and it was too strict for my taste, searching you, and always having to be so attentive to superiors. I was impressed how they [NOI's members] all believe these mystical teachings. I also couldn't get into it at that time because it was so militaristic. I could say it took a quite long time to make commitments (Interview # 1, paraphrased).

Another college graduate, male professional, also mentioned similar discomfort with the NOI's beliefs but he supported the movement's programmes to transform AAs.

In the early 1970s although I knew the Nation of Islam members were active but I never felt the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's teachings were pure Islam. So I did not feel to join the Nation, it took me a while. But I was always sympathetic to their plight ... I loved them but I knew the NOI was not really Islam (Interview # 6, verbatim).

A 44 year old female journalist's explanations are also interesting. She first heard the NOI through C. Eric Lincoln's book, *The Black Muslims in America*, but could not consider joining the movement due to her disagreements with some of the NOI's teachings.

At the time, I got to understand how the NOI evolved and came to existence. But I wasn't particularly in agreement with its teachings. That time C. Eric Lincoln considered it a separatist Black group that looked at themselves [NOI's members] as Gods and the white people the Devil.

I would say before I really acknowledged myself as being a member of the Nation, it was about a year. I had been going to the Temple-Mosque and listened the teachings but I hadn't made any step forward to join. And even at the time that I did, I hesitated. I've kept being drawn back to the Mosque. And then I just said that obviously this is where I'm supposed to be. And conversion is not always the easy transition you know. You're going through emotional evaluation and social evaluation, and you're assessing all your relationships at the same time. So it wasn't necessarily just a smooth transition. I really thought hard what I really wanted to do that (Interview, Aisha Mustapha, 1999, verbatim).

The most interesting comments were raised by politically and nationalistically inclined students and college graduates on the NOI's passive policies and political quietism. The political stance of the movement seemed to be a delaying factor for politically active Black students and some professionals. As was discussed in Chapter III, this policy was also one of the sources of the schism between Malcolm X and his young supporters, and the NOI's ruling stratum. Because of its non-active political policies, the movement had been subjected to harsh criticisms by AA professionals and nationalistically conscious college students and graduates (Lomax, 1963; Karenga, 1982, Muwakkil, 1998).

The case of a 53 year old male who did some college courses and had Black nationalist sentiments prior to joining the NOI is a good example.

It took me a couple of years. Because I did not like the Nation's political quietism. As an ex-member of SNCC, Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, I was very much involved in Black Power and the Black revolution.

He further comments about his feelings around the time he joined.

Later I liked the NOI's programs but I did not want to change my life style in order to follow strict rules (Respondent # 25).

Another male college student who joined in 1970 and was very much involved in the Black Power movement also points out his disagreements with the NOI where political activism is concerned.

During the Black Power movement we wanted action and revolution but the NOI's political restrictions backlashed on us by not supporting such policies. Later I grew to understand that our people needed self-help, self-discipline and group cohesion (Interview # 3, paraphrased).

The cases of two unrelated and independent Muslim journalists are good examples of how educational variables influence the decision-making process: Salim Muwakkil (1998) and Fahizah Alim (1998) were both involved in the Black Panthers. Being an activist in the Black Panthers and interested in Black Nationalism it took Mr Muwakkil

a considerable time to reconcile his differences with the NOI in political and religious realms. He points out his initial impressions of the NOI.

I thought myself as somewhat of an intellectual, attuned more to philosophical speculation than to the attitude of blind faith necessary as an adherent of an authoritarian religion. In fact, I once argued against the Nation's political quietism and its members' standardized rhetoric. The Black Muslims were nothing but a bunch of brainwashed automatons who could not function effectively without Muhammad's strict discipline. I criticized them for turning their backs on the struggle. Although I later changed that assessment, it turns out that my initial conclusion wasn't far off (Muwakkil, 1998:198-99).

He further continued his comments,

It increasingly seemed to me that the Nation's programme attended to what precisely were our greatest needs. Theological technicalities were less important to me than the Nation's overall programme: i.e., Muhammad's teachings emphasized discipline and personal responsibility, the very traits I had learned to recognize as essential to Black progress (*Ibid.*).

The above accounts of college students and university graduates who joined the movement mostly centre on the problems they experienced with the NOI's mythical and unconventional teachings and political quietism. While the elementary and high school graduates tended to believe in those teachings and policies, the college and university graduates were more critical and sceptical. In particular, the college graduates' attitudes indicate that they were not happy and did not find appealing the policies and agendas of civil right movements (see Chapter V). It also reflects their bitter dissatisfaction with the system and mainstream society and, therefore they were seeking and trying different alternatives, more radical and revolutionary. A 55 year old male academic briefly summarises the situation in which young college students and graduates found themselves.

They were looking where they fit in the society, what their parents had to go through. And they really did not think ... that all they had struggled through. So everybody, that was a majority of young African-American College students and graduates was dissatisfied with their own achievements as well. Although they knew Martin Luther King and all struggle, but it was that voice, so a lot of young college students began to look at the Nation of Islam and other alternatives (Interview, Dr Farid Muhammad, 1995, verbatim).

Therefore, the prospective NOI members' different positions influenced their recruitment process. Furthermore, the demographic variables of my samples seem to determine their motives for joining the NOI and converting to a particular form of religion, Islam (see Chapter V). Their motives and reasons will be analysed next.

6.3. Motives for joining the NOI and Conversion

There is a close link between recruits' pre-movement cognitive and ideological tendencies and a given movement's philosophy and agenda. But the reason why recruits join religious movements vary according to the main emphases of the movement's teachings and policies. Several sociological studies of religious movements show this link (Beckford, 1975a, 1978; Rochford, 1985). Beckford's studies revealed that the religious and moral worries of Jehovah's Witnesses were stimulating factors for joining the movement (1975a:160-80). Rochford found that there was also a close relation between the orientations of ISKCON members prior to joining and the movement's ideology and way of life. The majority of his samples ranked the movement's philosophy as one of the most significant factors contributing to their decision to join the movement (Rochford, 1985:68-69).

The motives and reasons for conversion to Islam in general are no different from major conversion experiences to other religious traditions and movements. Studies of conversion to Islam found that the common reasons that motivated people in their conversion process were Islam's religious teachings, moral and ethical codes, and its emphases on social and political issues (Khan, 1978; Poston, 1992; Anway, 1996; Köse, 1996). According to Poston these motivating factors account for 75% of conversion while Köse puts them at 77%. It must be noted, however, that these studies on conversion to Islam only analyse general patterns of motives and reasons for religious conversion to Islam. They cover different ethnic people and diverse interests but do not take into account other important factors in conversion, such as movement ideology, organisational patterns, policies, programmes and objectives. The pattern of motives for conversion to mainstream Islam does not hold true for NOI members in general and the samples of this study in particular.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter it seems inappropriate to use the term 'conversion' in accounting for becoming Muslim and joining the NOI because of its religious connotations (Berger, 1963; Travisano, 1970). The majority of NOI members' and my informants' reasons and motives for joining during the Elijah Muhammad era

were not primarily religious. Their motives and reasons cover a wide range of factors and issues. It is for this reason that I have proposed the terms 'alternation' and 'reversion' in order to include their previous orientations and the feelings that motivated them to join the NOI. In addition to this I have tried to reflect the role of organisational patterns in their conversion.

Earlier empirical studies of NOI members also found that the major motives and reasons for AAs joining the movement were not religious. They were, rather, a search for identity, self, and race and a desire to improve their socio-economic conditions. In other words, the movement's constant emphases on these issues were the main attractions for the majority of NOI members (Essien-Udom, 1970; Howard, 1965; Smith, 1984). Essien-Udom, for example, argues that 'the need for identity and the desire for self-improvement are the two principal motives which lead individuals to join and to remain in the NOI' (1970:83). My findings on the members' motives and reasons for joining the NOI draw similar results. Moreover, as Table 6.11 shows, their reasons and motives have varied with gender as well as over time. It is difficult to categorise my informants' reasons because they cover a wide range of areas. I have tried as far as possible to put similar motives together under the same category. As has already been indicated earlier in the discussion of recruitment strategies (6.2.1) this difference became obvious when respondents were asked what were their first impressions of the NOI and what attracted them to the movement and its members. While the male respondents were attracted by race, identity, nationalistic and militant emphases the female respondents focused more on respect, family values, and the dignified treatment they received from members. In the survey questionnaire I asked what their primary reasons and motives were for joining the NOI and to give their four most important reasons. Despite the NOI members' emotional claims that the movement was an Islamic movement, religious values were of secondary significance (Lincoln, 1973). They were not often used for attraction and recruitment. It is for this reason that I contend that my informants' joining the NOI and their becoming Muslim were not simply a conversion experience. Along with religious and moral concerns, consciousness of race and ethnic identity and nationalistic and political sentiments played significant roles in making them join the NOI. As Table 6.11 shows religious motives surprisingly only ranked third. The most

interesting outcome is that the majority of my sample reported that identity, self, race issues and economic and self-help motives were the most important reasons for their joining the NOI. Race, identity and self-consciousness ranked as the most motivating

Table 6.11. What were your primary reasons and motives for joining the NOI? Please give your four most important reasons (By gender, reason and period) (1946-1975)

	From 1946 to the early 1960s		From the early 1960s to 1975		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
a) Knowledge of self / Racial and Ethnic pride, race consciousness and identity / Self-respect, worth and esteem / Love Yourself	23	13	25	17	78
b) Doing for Self / Self-Help / Reliance Economic Spirit-policy / Self-sufficiency/ Upliftment / Better living / Empowerment	23	12	24	15	74
c) Spiritual Fulfilment / Islamic- Religious Teachings / God-consciousness / Morality / Truth / Religion of my ancestors	14	14	15	17	60
d) Unity / Close Brotherhood- Sisterhood / Sincerity-kindness / Cohesiveness / Spirit of the strong community	16	10	16	12	54
e) Political / Nationalistic-Racial Agendas / Justice-Equality / Freedom	16	5	21	11	53
f) Educational Objectives and programmes for our people	3	4	5	10	22
g) Conservative values; Responsibility, Discipline myself / Clean life / Righteousness / Clear Directions and goals	8	8	10	9	35
h) Emphases on strong Family Values / Marriage / Respect-love Protect our Black women	5	10	8	17	40
Total:	108	76	124	108	416

factor in 78 responses. There is a close link between my informants' reasons for joining and the NOI's strong and constant emphases on these issues. In addition, when we add the proportion of respondents citing the movement's nationalistic, militant and uncompromising stances as a motivating factor to the proportion citing nationalistic,

race and identity motives it increases to 131 out the 416 responses for the four primary reasons for joining the NOI. It is not surprising to see that the aforementioned issues were the most important reasons for my informants' joining, because prior to their recruitment to the NOI they were active and mobile seekers who were involved in and supported Black nationalist, social and cultural organisations (see Chapter V). In other words, they were already conscious of issues such as identity, race, nationalistic feeling and so on. In both periods these motives were important, but in the second period political and nationalistic reasons increased. This seems to be closely related to the rise and fall of the Black Power movements. Those who were active in Black Power movements, although they were critical of and did not like the NOI's political quietism, they noticed that their own programmes and teachings were not effective as they were just a propaganda machine and theoretical rather than practical. They recognised that the NOI's programmes and teachings were more effective in terms of improving AAs' socio-economic conditions (Interview, Aisha Mustapha, 1999; Muwakkil, 1998). In Table 6.11, the second highest ranked motives are economic and self-help. It is not surprising why economic and self-help reasons are motivating factors in joining the movement when the NOI's economic teachings and programmes for development of self-sufficiency, 'self-help' and 'doing for self' and their relative success in improving AAs' socio-economic conditions in comparison with other Black organisations are taken into account. This aspect of the movement was the most effective recruitment strategy. As argued earlier, a large number of my informants' first impressions of the NOI were positive because of its impact on changing the socio-economic conditions of AAs. In chapter V, it is also shown through analysis of the socio-demographic variables of my samples how the NOI's economic teachings changed the members' socio-economic status. In terms of period and gender variables, the most motivating factors - race, identity, and economic motives - have not changed radically and have appealed equally.

The other motives which have contributed to their decision to join the movement, the responses being equal for both gender and periods in Table 6.11, are unity, brotherhood-sisterhood, sincerity, kindness, warmth and friendliness of NOI members. This aspect of religious movements, and particularly communal groups, is an important factor in

attracting and recruiting prospective members. Rochford (1985:71), for example, found that the warmth and friendliness of devotees contributed to his informants' decision to join ISKCON. The NOI probably presented and provided a more positive image of unity, friendliness and protection than the other Black religio-nationalist and political organisations, although at some points in the early years of the movement, in the mid-1960s and early 1970s personal clashes, power struggles and infighting engendered bitterness (see Chapter III).

These motives become more apparent when the gender variable is taken into account. In Table 6.11 category (h) shows that warmth, friendliness, protection and respect were more motivating factors to join the NOI for my female respondents in both periods than for males. Womanly virtues, respect, dignity and protection are given more emphasis. Essien-Udom noticed that this policy within the movement was a recruitment tactic.

Muhammad's semi-religious demand that his followers must respect the Black woman has an appeal for Black women seeking to escape from their lowly and humiliating position in Negro society. He describes Black women's recruitment to the NOI 'as a journey from shame to dignity' (1970:85).

In my samples in the two periods 27 out of 46 and 13 out of 58 female respondents, respectively, reported that the aforementioned issues were one of the important reasons for their joining the NOI. The majority of West's (1994) samples also pointed out that these aspects of the NOI were important motivating factors in their becoming members.

However, the most interesting outcome as far as this chapter is concerned is that the respondents only ranked third religious, spiritual and moral issues as motivating factors. It is presumed that these are the most relevant reasons for my respondents joining the NOI as far as the literal meaning of conversion is concerned, that is, implying religious change and transformation. Although they experienced substantial changes in terms of their beliefs and practices their conversion seemed to be more of an emotional protest against their previous religious affiliations, Christianity (Baer, 1984; Baer and Singer, 1992). Yet the movement continued to use the literature and symbolism of religion, namely the Bible, in order to attack the hypocritical practices of Christians (see their religious dissatisfaction and disillusionment in Chapter V). This was also one of the

recruitment tactics of the NOI to attract the Black masses who were already disenchanted with both the dominant religion and the values of mainstream society.

As can be seen in Table 6.11, the motives of my samples on religious issues vary with gender and time. The female respondents appear to be more likely to have an interest in religious issues than the male respondents. The religious movements seem to provide 'a potential solution to the problem of marginality faced by women in contemporary society' (Rochford, 1985:130). This is true for my female respondents. The NOI has given a special place to Black women in the infrastructure of the organisation as educators, administrators in the Temple and helpers. Unlike traditional and cultural approaches of Islam to gender the NOI seems to have given a more active role, power and responsibility to women. West (1994) adequately describes the NOI females' role as 'Nation Builders'. However, the proportion of both males and females prior to the early 1960s who reported that religious issues and teachings were more motivating factors for their joining the NOI was greater than in the later period. In the later period, by contrast, as we have observed, there has been a remarkable increase in nationalistic, militant and revolutionary sentiments. A Muslim leader compares the religiosity of those who joined in the earlier period with those who were recruited later.

The overwhelming number of members that came in the Nation in the '30s, '40s, and '50s had more interest in religion. But those who were attracted to the Nation during the Black Power days of late '60s and early 70s, they were not interested in that much. They had no real religious interest. But as I said the early members they had a religious interest (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995a, verbatim).

The following remarks made by my informants for their motives and reasons for joining the NOI show the complex and diverse patterns of their motives for conversion to the movement's specific form of Islam in Elijah Muhammad's era. A male professional, who was actively involved in the Black Panthers prior to his joining the NOI, states that his motives centre on social, economic and political issues rather than religion.

nationalistic thrust; economic self-reliance; discipline; personal responsibility (Respondent # 102).

Another former Black Power activist who joined the NOI in 1972 gives the following reasons:

Challenge to White racism; saw the Muslims are successful; Brotherhood; Black-love and self-pride (Respondent # 28).

An ex-African Revolutionary Party member does not mention motives related to religion but, rather, his nationalist and militant past.

militancy; political; solidarity; fighting against white racism (Respondent # 45).

A 52 year old produce manager's remarks also do not include any religious motives.

racial and ethnic pride; self-worth; economic empowerment; brotherhood (Respondent # 31).

Another male professional's motives reflect the NOI's political and nationalist motto:

Freedom; justice; equality; purpose (Respondent # 12).

However, the remarks of respondents who joined the NOI prior to the early 1960s give more space to religious issues. Many of them are female members. Consider the following comments of respondents whose motives for joining the movement are religious and moral. A 70 year old retired pensioner who joined the NOI in 1954 gives her reasons for joining.

Allah; clean life; responsibility; my people (Respondent # 65).

A housewife reports her reasons as

To worship GOD to the highest degree; have a better marriage; responsible and clean life for my children; clear direction (Respondent # 30).

Not only are the early members' motives primarily religious: some female members who joined in the later period also included religious and moral concerns. A 45 year old female medical doctor's motives cover all the popular aspects of the NOI.

Spiritual fulfilment; ethnic-racial pride; belonging to an organised community; respect for Black women (Respondent # 5).

Some male respondents also counted religious and moral issues as one of their four reasons for joining.

Truth about my religion; self pride; brotherhood; direction and goal (Respondent # 27).

A self-employed male informant who joined in 1973 counts his concerns as follow.

A religious way of life; unity; doing for self; nationalistic thrust (Respondent # 41).

The most interesting motives shown by a significant number of my informants relate to their reasons for joining to the historical roots and traditions of AAs. For example, a 70 year old retired self-employed constructor maintains that Islam was part of his history.

Islam was the religion of my ancestors; close brotherhood; doing for self; independence (Respondent # 36).

A 56 year old poultry shop owner also emphasised Islam as part of AA history.

Al-Islam was the religion of our forefathers and our people in Africa and the East; doing for self; history, cultural and civilization of Black people prior to slavery; cleanliness (Respondent # 66).

Above all, the most salient reasons pointed out by my female respondents centred on womanly virtues, respect, protection, honour, dignity, love of Black women, and family values and marriage. This has been discussed briefly earlier in the section on recruitment strategies. Consider the following remarks reported by female respondents. A 50 year old female educator remembers the things that affected her conversion.

Respect for Black woman; dress codes; educating our people; cleanliness of Muslims (Respondent # 2).

Another professional female who currently works at a Muslim newspaper relates her dramatic circumstances in which the movement provided help and support at the time.

My husband just went to jail for murder and was getting the electric chair. I had just had a baby with a 4 year old at home. I really needed support for bringing up my children and a comfortable environment. After joining the Nation a job was offered at *Muhammad Speaks* newspaper. Muslim Brothers and Sisters in the Nation showed a wonderful warm, nurturing type of atmosphere where you were taken care of, respected and protected (Interview, Zubaydah Madyun, 1996, paraphrased).

A female substitute teacher's comments focus mostly on womanly virtues upheld in the movement.

Treatment and highly respected status given to the African American women; love yourself; love your Black woman; protect the Black woman; family values (Respondent # 82).

A housewife's attraction to and motives for joining the NOI reflect the most popular aspects of the movement for females.

The Nation's dress codes gave a sense of security and honor to the Black woman; Black women got respect from men, brothers; Muslims' self-esteem; to be proud of yourself, identity and your Blackness (Respondent # 77).

And finally a 44 year old female journalist's account describes how the life styles and manners displayed by both genders in the NOI attracted her and influenced her decision-making.

Yeah, well it was, it was, I don't think I got too deep into the teachings at that particular time, you know, in to the Nation of Islam history. But it was for me, it was dignity exhibited by men and women, the way they dressed, the way they're treated by men as a kind of respect and status. Actually, the women were given the highest status in terms of their value in the community (Interview, Aisha Mustapha, 1999, verbatim).

The remarks of my informants display diverse patterns of motives and reasons that played important roles in their decision to join the NOI and convert to its distinctive form of Islam. Unlike the findings of other studies of conversion to Islam the majority of my respondents' motives and reasons for joining in Elijah Muhammad's period were not religious. Rather they were the NOI's teachings and emphasis on race, self, identity, historical past and experience of AAs, its self-help and economic principles and organisational structures and its members' distinctive uniforms and behaviour.

Nevertheless, these typical and unique features of motives of AAs for converting to Islam began changing after the death of Honourable Elijah Muhammad in 1975 and went through a process of polarisation. From 1975 onwards the newly elected leader of the community, Imam W. D. Mohammed (formerly Wallace D. Muhammad) introduced new religious beliefs, reforms and policies to bring the entire movement from its peripheral position to the centre to accord with both the mainstream teachings of Islam and the values of American society (Mamiya, 1982, 1983; Marsh, 1984; Gardel, 1996; Tinaz, 1996). The fundamental and radical changes in organisational structures and administration, teachings, practices and policies in the history of the movement generated diverse patterns of schism and factions among the followers of Honourable Elijah Muhammad due to the different emphases and priorities they gave to his teachings and programmes. This schism and its consequences and how my informants responded to the changes will be discussed and analysed in the next chapter (Chapter VII). These developments and changes are also reflected in a polarisation of Islam's appeal and attraction to AAs, into the two most popular and contending AAM communities, that of Imam W. D. Mohammed and that of Minister Louis Farrakhan. While Minister Farrakhan's Nation of Islam (NOI) appeared to continue the tradition

and practices of the old NOI, Imam W. D. Mohammed's Muslim American Society (MAS) introduced primarily religious and novel patterns in recruiting and converting AAs to Islam. The religious experiences of the followers of these two leaders will be examined and compared in Chapter VIII.

Chapter Six: Notes

1) Some professionals and students such as Askia Muhammad (*The Washington Post*, May, 8, 1994), Salim Muwakkil (1998) and Fahizah Alim (1998) said that their impressions of the NOI were initially critical and they did not take it seriously before they joined the movement because of its mythical teachings, and narrow propaganda and policies.

2). Imam Rabbani Mubashir was the Imam of a local Masjid called Masjid Ar-Rahman in the West side of Chicago during my field research in 1995. In 1997 the Board of Trustees of the Masjid sold the property.

3) Information obtained through personal communication.

4) Several other Black nationalist oriented professionals also felt that other Black Power movements were too preoccupied with ideology, theory and verbalism, but they realised that the NOI was actually channelling similar objectives into more concrete and practical programmes (see Salim Muwakkil (1998), Fahizah Alim (1998) and Askia Muhammad's (1994) personal accounts).

CHAPTER VII

‘Change’ or ‘Fall’: Developments since 1975

Organisational, structural and ideological changes and developments since the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975 have been described as ‘Change’ for those who joined the transition from the NOI to mainstream Islam and as ‘Fall’ for those who were dissatisfied and disappointed with the reforms and changes initiated by Imam W.D. Mohammed in the process of Islamisation of the movement.

There is a rich literature about the developments, changes, reforms in beliefs, ideology, and organisational structure of the movement, and splits against these radical reforms after the death of Elijah Muhammad (Mamiya, 1982, 1983; Lincoln, 1983; Marsh, 1984; Lee, 1988; McCloud, 1995; Gardell, 1996; Tinaz, 1996). Since there are significant studies on the above issues, in this chapter, I would like to analyse these developments from the sociological perspective by using empirical data collected through field research and reflect on how the NOI members reacted to these changes. My analyses will be brief but aim to give a concise idea about the developments. First I will discuss the succession issue. Second I will examine the reforms in beliefs, policies and organisational structure of the movement. Third I will try to show how these reforms and changes created splits and dissatisfactions among the believers. And finally I indicate how two contending AAM communities, Imam W. D. Mohammed’s community and Minister L. Farrakhan’s NOI have moved towards mainstream American society, politics and economy over the years.

7.1 Succession to the Throne

There is a common assumption among sociologists of religion, of sects, cults, new religions and organisations that the period immediately following the death of the leader of a religious group is critical, a period that generally leads to major disruption and often schismatic consequences for the group itself (Wallis, 1979; Rochford, 1985,

1989). However, this widely held assumption is not so much a finding derived from a close observation of the phenomenon in a specific movement.

A long time charismatic leader of the NOI, Elijah Muhammad died on 25 February 1975 without nominating a personal successor to his office. However, some set of rules for succession might be invested in which do not infringe on the essentially charismatic characteristics of the leader's position. That assumption ties religious movements and organisation to Max Weber's classic discussion of 'charismatic election'.

With the death of the prophet...the question of successorship arises... this question can be solved... by the sacramental substantiation of charisma, the successor being designated by consecration, as in the case in the hierocratic or apostolic succession... the hierocratic no longer rules by virtue of purely personal qualities, but... because he has been legitimized by an act of charismatic election (Gerth and Mills, 1958:297)

The anticipated power struggle for the leadership position as Honourable Elijah Muhammad's successor did not take place, at least, not immediately, not until 1977. The day following Elijah Muhammad's death, 20.000 of the NOI members were already gathered in Chicago for the Annual Savior's Day celebration on 26 February, 1975, the National Secretary of the NOI, Abass Rassoull, announced that 'the mantle of leadership has fallen to Minister Wallace D. Muhammad' (Kashif, 1975). The question of a smooth succession was solved as family issue in the closed inner circle of the NOI officials. The newly designated leader received unanimous ratification by the NOI high-ranking officials and the rank-and-file members. Unlike the argument of Wallis (1979) the death of a charismatic leader of a religious group did not engender instability and a vacuum of authority that led to a split and factionalism immediately after the death of Elijah Muhammad. Because, as Weber argued, the succession question 'can be solved ... by the sacramental substantiation of charisma, the successor being designated by consecration' (Gerth and Mills, 1958:297). Wallace D. Muhammad's succession was divinely endorsed. According to the NOI historiography, his birth was surrounded with legends indicating his mission. W. D. Fard, the founder of the NOI (see Chapter I), had prophesied the sex of the unborn child and wrote 'Wallace' in chalk on the back of door in the home of Elijah Muhammad in Detroit. More interestingly, he foretold that the coming child would help his father (Elijah Muhammad) and succeed his father as the

head of the NOI. In his first official interview, Wallace D. Muhammad (now Imam W. D. Mohammed) indicated that his succession and mission were predestined.

It was God's intention. It was God's plan. But I have also heard my Father, Himself, says that when I was born I was conceived in my mother, he had been born as the servant ... by the me being born at the time when He [Elijah Muhammad] was in contact with His Saviour, [W. F. Muhammad], helped to form me, not only as a child of His lion, but a Child for the Mission ... I have been groomed because it was necessary ... My father watched over my religious development ... (H. Muhammad, 1975).

Wallace D. Muhammad was born on 30 October, 1933 as the seventh child or fifth son of Clara and Elijah Muhammad. He was educated in the NOI schooling system, University of Islam, and trained to service in different positions in the NOI infrastructure such as the FOI soldier and Minister in Philadelphia. In 1961 he was sentenced to three years in prison for refusing the draft laws. He spent time reading mainstream Islamic literature and began to realise that there were inconsistencies between Sunni Islam and his father's teachings. Since then he has broken away from the religious beliefs of the NOI and envisioned a reformed version of religion in line with orthodox Islam. In the early 1960s, as indicated in Chapter III, he once confided to Malcolm X about his personal convictions and plans about the future of NOI as legitimate Islamic movement (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995a; Malcolm X, 1968:453).

Although my findings do not represent the entire NOI membership who joined the movement in Elijah Muhammad's era, the overwhelming majority of my respondents from that era, 93 out of the 104, still see Imam W. D. Mohammed as a legitimate successor of Elijah Muhammad. Despite the fact that he did not nominate any successor Elijah Muhammad treated some of his top aides specially. Some of the contending leaders of splinter NOI groups refer to Elijah Muhammad's treatments as, to some extent, a source of authority to legitimise their succession. Their claims are a reminder of Nyomarkay's theory of factionalism. He maintained that authority legitimisation is an important determinant in the schism of ideological movements.

the source of authority, or the kind of legitimacy, is relevant to the nature of factionalism because, as the focus of group cohesion it becomes the object not subject of factional conflict. Be it charismatic leader or the ideology, the source of authority is the prize for which factions compete ... (Nyomarkay, 1965:4).

Here only the accounts of the Imam's followers and Minister Farrakhan's contentions will be taken into account because of the scope of this study and data collected. A local Imam whose parents have been close to Elijah Muhammad's family since the 1940s comments that,

Oh, of course, it was no question that was the Imam [Imam W. D. Mohammed]. It's not, it was no question, it was, even his children we're raised, we're raised as children with that concept that the Imam would help his father, you know. But I guess we didn't see that dept of it. But it was there, we're raised with that concept ... (Interview, Imam D. Karim, 1996, verbatim).

Two sources of legitimation to succession are often referred to among the Imam's followers. The first is that Elijah Muhammad often used to tell his followers that 'I'm not teaching Islam, I'm not teaching religion. I'm just preparing you for that. The person who comes after me to teach Islam will not use anything that I said ... the one comes after me will teach you Islam ...' (Interviews, Imam M. B. Deen, 1997; Imam D. Karim, 1996; Imam R. Mubashir, 1995; Imam S. Salahuddin, 1995).

The second case is that in the early 1970s when Elijah Muhammad accepted back his son, Imam W. D. Mohammed and appointed him as Minister at Temple No 2 in Chicago and the Imam began teaching his version of Islam. The FOI and Temple officials recorded his service and brought the tape to Elijah Muhammad. A local Imam narrates the leader's reactions to his son's novel teachings, which were different from his classic teachings and were closer to mainstream Islam.

Before his [Elijah Muhammad] final departure from his life, he was around the table with many officials, the Honourable Elijah Muhammad in the National House in Chicago. He made a statement then when they [Chicago officials] had a tape that they played the Imam's teachings. And the tape was played to his father. They tried to make the Imam looked bad but that turned up to be good, because when his father heard it, his father jumped up from the table with joy and started clapping. He said 'oh my son, you got it, you got it. My son can go anywhere and teach that teachings anywhere'. This statement gave a stamp to prove that and show that the Imam was the one to lead this community on. I think his wife (Clara Muhammad) was at the table too when he felt joy ⁽¹⁾ (Interview, Imam D. Karim, 1996, verbatim).

Dr A. Salaam with whom his objective and critical analysis of the history of the NOI and succession issue impress me also makes similar comments referring to the accounts of Minister Yusuf Shah of Chicago at the time.

On one particular night I think in the summer of 1974 in the National House the Honourable Elijah Muhammad said he wanted his son, Wallace to be the next leader. But I was not there

when he said that. Brother Minister Yusuf Shah told me that ... (Interview, Dr A. Salaam, 1995b, verbatim).

However the source of authority that legitimised Minister Farrakhan's claim was based Elijah Muhammad's special treatment of him on one specific occasion. He says that,

First, Elijah Muhammad was very very wise teacher. He loved his son, Wallace very much. He wanted the man that is called Imam Warith Deen Mohammed to succeed him. But the Imam had a serious theological differences with his father ... Well we loved him ... Now as we come to 1972 when we bought a new, was a Greek Orthodox Church, Elijah Muhammad turned it into our National Headquarters. During 22 weeks speeches, The Theology of Time, he called me at one during one speech out where I was seating. And as David did Solomon, he sat me in his chair that no other person ever sat it. And then a few weeks later he called me out in front of all of the followers and told them that he wanted them to look at me whenever they saw me, to listen to me whenever I spoke. And if whatever I bid them to do they should do, whenever I bid them to go what to stay away from, they should obey me. Well that was confirming me at that time. When it was reported that he [Elijah Muhammad] had died I was in a total state of confusion. I really didn't think that I was qualified to lead the movement if he would dead. And so when his son felt that he could lead the movement knew what the next steps were then I said fine I would follow you as I followed your father ... (Interview, Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

When Imam W. D. Mohammed was installed on the throne by the overwhelming support of Elijah Muhammad's followers as Supreme Minister of the NOI at his very first interview he implied that there were some changes to come, particularly, where the belief systems of the NOI were concerned.

My role is not that of a Messenger of God, but that of a Mujeddid, M-U-J-E-D-D-I-D, meaning 'one to watch the new Islam' and see that it is constantly and continually being renewed (H. Muhammad, 1975).

As the new leader Imam gradually initiated a process of reconstruction of the NOI and its teachings, organisations, policies, symbols and practices not only to accord with mainstream Islam, but also to accommodate societal American values.⁽²⁾ These changes and reforms are the next to be reviewed briefly.

7.2. Reforms, Transformation and Universalism

To understand these changes Zald and Ash's arguments provide a sociological explanation at why social or religious organisations undergo change and transformations over time.

As an MO [movement organisation] attains an economic and social base in the society, as the original charismatic leadership is replaced, a bureaucratic structure emerges and a general accommodation to the society occurs (Zald and Ash, 1966:327).

The developments upon the Elijah Muhammad's death in the NOI have shown these kinds of signs. However, as indicated earlier at the end of Chapter I, even Honourable Elijah Muhammad hinted some conciliatory remarks concerning white people, American society and religion of Islam and Muslims on his last Saviour's Day convention in 1974. Imam W. D. Mohammed gradually planned to introduce the movement and its members to new teachings and policies in order to adopt a congruity between the NOI and mainstream Islam and society. To achieve his plans without causing a mass defection and upheaval among the members, he presented each change delicately as being the intended plans of his father's (Gardel, 1996). He explained that the teachings of W. D. Fard and Elijah Muhammad were to be understood metaphorically, not literally. The Imam argued that the NOI's teachings were necessary in the era of his father when the Blackmen were at the bottom of the society. When the existing teachings and programmes of the NOI had fulfilled their purpose, more advanced teachings should be introduced to make further progress towards achieving closer links with mainstream Islam and a greater acceptance by American society. Therefore, new teaching and programmes were necessary. In that direction, he opened the door of the NOI to allow Whites membership and abolished the long exclusionist racial composition of the membership of the movement (Delaney, 1975).

The Imam moved and encouraged his followers to participate in the political life of the USA. This policy was an odd with the AAMs previous practice because the NOI policy under Elijah Muhammad's leadership was to stay away from the 'devil's' political system; rather the NOI advocated political quietism (see Chapters I and III). More importantly he reinterpreted two significant concepts of two races of humanity, 'White' and 'Black' which were the hallmark and central pillars of the beliefs of the movement. The terms, according to the Imam, must be taught in higher language' (Gardell, 1996). The concept of 'White man is devil' was interpreted not biologically but mentally. On the other hand, the divine nature of Black man was de-deified (Gardell, 1996:83-4).

To bring the NOI closer to Islam, the Imam introduced the community the proper religious practices and rituals of Islam such as *salat* (prayer), *sawm* (fasting in the month of Ramadan), *zakat* (charity or taxation) and *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca and

Medina in Saudi Arabia). In this Islamisation process, he made 'Ministers' became 'Imams', and 'Temples' turned to 'Masjids or 'Mosque' (Mamiya, 1982; Lincoln, 1983; Lee, 1988; Gardell, 1996; Tinaz, 1996). Furthermore, he changed his name from Wallace D. Muhammad to Imam Warith Deen Mohammed and encouraged Muslims in his community to take up Islamic or Arabic and African names (W.D. Muhammad, 1976) in order to reconstruct their new identities connecting to religion and history.

Besides these new practices, the Imam also, as Gardell indicates, 'dismantle an empire', the NOI's organisational structure, especially the paramilitary unit, the FOI and business enterprises. He dissolved this military cadre in order to prevent possible organised internal opposition to his reforms and also because of their unpleasant practices in the past (Barboza, 1994; Evanzz, 1992). The Business Empire built during Elijah Muhammad was ailing due to mismanagement. The Imam announced in 1976 that 'the economic health of the Nation of Islam is not what it was projected to be'. Therefore, he launched a series of privatisations of the NOI communal enterprises and sold them to private owners in the community.

To remove the negative image portrayed by both media and internal fighting, the Imam changed the very name of the organisation, its newspaper and educational institutions. His main vision was to bring the community from its peripheral status to the centre and then integrate with both wider society and the International Muslim community. He changed name of the NOI to, first, the Bilalian⁽³⁾, and on November 1976, to the World Community of al Islam in the West (WCIW). It has renamed the American Muslim Mission (AMM) in April in 1978. And recently, they began calling the community, the Muslim American Society (MAS) (*Los Angeles Times*, September 6, 1997). Accordingly the name of movement newspaper was also evolved, from *Muhammad Speaks* to *Bilalian News*, then *American Muslim Journal* and currently it is called the *Muslim Journal*.

In 1979, the Imam resigned as the head and resident Imam of Chicago Masjid E. Muhammad. He planned to give greater democratic rights, autonomy and responsibilities to local communities and Masjids (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed,

1995b). He and his top aides formed the Council of Imams to handle religious and administrative duties. And finally, in 1985, the Imam announced the dissolution the infrastructure of his community, American Muslim Mission, and formed a sort of consultation body called the National Shura of Imams (Interview, Imam D. Karim, 1996). By this organisational change, he aimed and encouraged his Muslim officials and followers to associate and collaborate with other Islamic communities of all races and ethnic origins in the USA (Buursma and Houston, 1985). He said ‘we all members of the worldwide Islamic community. We are not to be confined and identified in geographical, political and ethnic terms. We are all one part of the Muslim family’ (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995a). Currently, his community is loosely structured at local levels and the nation-wide, the Majlis-i Shura oversees and monitors all organisational and religious affairs of the community. While he was introducing all these reforms and changes, Imam W. D. Mohammed received more moral, political, financial supports and donations from a variety of Islamic and Arab sources than his father, Elijah Muhammad, namely, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, and the Organisation of Islamic Conference in order to spread Islam and establish institutions (Gans and Lowe, 1980; Mamiya, 1982; Tinaz, 1993). Some Islamic countries, like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, offered scholarships and grants to train and educate the community’s imams and officials (Interview, Imam Murad B. Muhammad, 1997; see Marsh, 1984). The most interestingly, by the late 1970s and the early 1980s, Imam W. D. Mohammad sent his imams to the Caribbean and Britain to spread and teach Islam among their own kind and establish Masjids (Tinaz, 1998, 1999).

Above all, the most salient policy that the Imam introduced was his 1977 call to the AAMs to participate in mainstream American Independence Day celebration on July 4 (Sheppard, 1978b). This was a total break with Elijah’s policy that was totally isolated from the White dominant system.

The above radical and swift changes paved the way for disaffection and disillusionment among the significant segment of the AAMs (Delaney, 1978). However, my findings do not cover the general attitude of the old NOI Muslims at that time and I was unable to

contact those who had totally defected from the communities. Among my informants who came from the old NOI days these were three different responses to the Imam's radical reforms. 93 out of 104 supported the Imam's reforms. Six of the respondents although they supported his Islamisation reforms, were critical of the dismantling of the NOI organisational structures. The remaining five respondents disapproved of any changes made to Elijah Muhammad's teachings and programmes. The following accounts show their reactions towards these changes. For example, a 52 year old male's comments reflect total submission to the leadership.

Changes were necessary process of spiritual and intellectual evolution. A blessing from Allah, that Imam W. D. Mohammed has purified our concept of Islam and our understanding of creation and human development (Respondent # 13).

A 47 years old auto mechanic's account indicates the support of the changes.

In order to get where we are today we had to have the gradual steps. These steps should go down in history ... I would be forever thankful. Through Allah's mercy and Imam Mohammed's leadership we finally came into our destiny, knowledge of Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (Respondent # 28).

A local Masjid's Imam comments that,

It shows a Muslim community trying to find its true identity. I went along with the change ... It was wonderful, coming into right understanding of God liberates you and that's what I wanted (Interview, Imam S.Salahuddin, 1995, verbatim).

A female professional journalist makes an interesting comparison between the changes in the NOI and the case of a popular changes in the old Soviet Union during the Gorbachev era.

It was overwhelming relief. Muslims anticipated the change. They knew it it was coming ... The best picture, I think, to give a total feel what took place, Imam W. D. Mohammed's changes and decentralization, look at Gorbachev's Perestrojka. What Garbocev did and decentralized and dismantled the ruling party over Russian, USSR. And we saw that we've seen this before really on smaller scale and more local scale, but our lives that's what the Imam did. He decentralized a Nation within a Nation and gave the power back to the people. And doing so, they decided to make decisions for themselves and reform their own communities and their own localities, and use their own resources ... (Interview, Aisha Mustapha, 1999, verbatim).

However, some academics and professionals showed mixed reactions towards the changes. While they are sympathetic and supportive of the reforms introduced to the beliefs and practices of religion, they are critical about the organisational changes and policies bringing them closer to the system of the USA (Muwakkil, 1998; Alim, 1998).

A 52 year old academic expresses his reactions.

With theological modifications and more mature Islamic context I supported those changes ... But gradually I recognized the incompetency of the Imam W.D. Mohammed and his escape from responsibility. Many Muslims realize need to respect and support and leadership but also realize a need to grow in Islamic universality without compromising our ethnic, racial reality and socio-political issues in the USA (Respondent # 6).

A female nurse who joined the NOI in the late 1960s makes similar remarks.

I do not consider myself as departing from the Nation of Islam. I still support its good works, its Islamic endeavors ... Time and change are natural happening. There was no disagreement until Imam W. D. Muhammad began to berate the Honourable Elijah Muhammad in 1978 and 1979, I think around that time, the Believers became very confused ... (Respondent # 92).

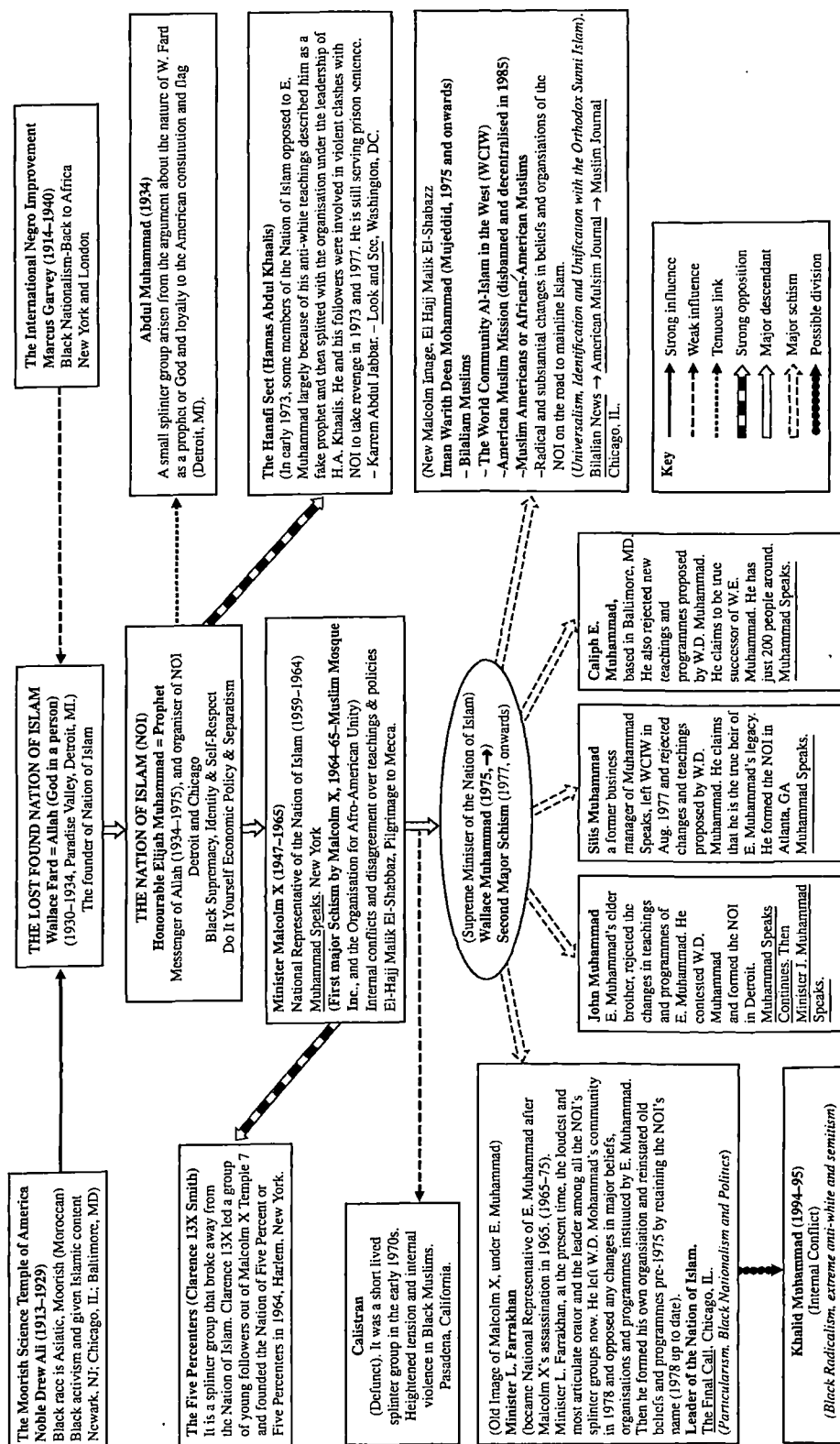
The above mixed views and lack of support were signs of the upcoming major and diverse splits in the history of community.

7.3. A House Divided

The Imam's radical reforms in teachings, policies and organisational structure created many splits. Currently, the splinter NOI leaders all claim to restore Elijah Muhammad's NOI organisationally, ideologically and its programmes. McCloud, listed in her book all these splinter NOI groups (1995). In this chapter, it will be considered only two contending large nation-wide communities, Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS and Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI.⁽⁴⁾ It is also due to the data collected which only reflects the factors of split as far as these two communities are concerned. But Figure 7.1. gives a brief historical evolution and schisms of the NOI over the years.

Unlike personal conflict and power struggle among the elite of religious and social organisations (Wilson, 1961), behind these two communities can be seen that different interests and perspectives, mostly priorities given to specific areas such religious, organisational, race and ethnicity, and socio-economic (Sheppard, 1978a). Wilson (1971) argued that the sources of schism in Plymouth Brethren were principally doctrinal and organisational. This is also the case of for the all current NOI schismatic groups, which have been derived from the Elijah Muhammad's NOI since August 1977. The main reasons for their leaving were the new leadership's deviations from the original teachings, objectives and programmes of the NOI that designed and practised during Elijah Muhammad leadership.

Figure 7.1 The Historical evolution and schisms in the Nation of Islam (NOI).



Zald and Ash suggest that members of religious and social organisations may be lost through three types of changes that occur in their transformations; goal transformation, organisational maintenance and oligarchization. The first type, goal transformation, is relevant in interpreting the defections of the AAMs since the late 1970s. It refers to pragmatic leadership's replacement of unattainable goals with more diffuse goals so that the organisation can pursue a broader range of targets. Goal transformation typically moves the organisation in a more rational and conservative direction of accommodation to dominant societal consensus (Zald and Ash, 1966:327).

The complex and rapid goal transformations of the Imam's community engendered defection and sometimes confusion. A male Muslim researcher describes the circumstances in which Muslims were confused at the time of transition. Muslims, I can say, majority of them, were not ready yet for such radical changes. They were still in 'baby nation' mentality (Interview # 4). Those who defected believed that the new leadership had moved away from the Elijah Muhammad's goals and teachings. Similarly in his study of ISKCON Rochford noted that the transformation of goals, objectives and life styles that the movement's founder instituted contributed to disaffection, factionalism and group defection after the death of leader of the group (Rochford, 1985, 1989).

The other important component of the goal transformation is that the direction and policy of social organisations to take and follow. The new leadership initiated changes to show accommodation of organisational goals to the dominant societal consensus (see *Bilalian News*, July 13, 1978) which was a fundamental shift away from the old NOI's unconventional policies and objectives (see Chapters I and III). Therefore, the organisational and policy changes in social and religious organisations were typical signs of their institutionalisation process to accommodate with the values of mainstream society.

Yinger's arguments are also relevant to account for a major schism that occurred in the post-Elijah period. He identified five social, cultural, and character sources of religious

divisions that arose in religious movements (Yinger, 1970:232-33). In addition he maintained that religious 'inventions' or 'innovations' are other sources of schism.

There is a level of analysis on which it is appropriate to study religious innovations as the starting point of a series of events. The degree of acceptance of those innovations, however, and the direction of their spread, is vitally dependent on the needs and desires of potential audiences. In Weber's term, there is an 'elective affinity' between certain religious ideas and the social circumstances of particular groups (Yinger, 1970: 233-34).

The Imam's radical reforms and changes in theological teachings, organisational structure and policies of the community caused three types of group formation, defection and disengagement among the followers of Elijah Muhammad. First are those who accepted and supported all changes introduced by the Imam and still affiliated with his loosely structured organisation, currently called the Muslim American Society (MAS). Second are high-ranking officials and ordinary members, whose constraints and disaffection have grown as they have sought to challenge policies and practices initiated by the new leader. This type occurred sometimes on an individual level where there were fringe dissidents and dissatisfied individuals; on a group level, opposition members formed a group defection. For the latter, the typical example is Silis Muhammad and Minister Louis Farrakhan's defections. While the first one took away with him a small number of the members, the second caused a significant schism in the community (McCloud, 1994, 1995). The third type of disengagement and dissatisfaction arose among mostly academics and professionals who supported the Imam's reforms in the Islamisation process of the NOI teachings but did not like the changes made in organisational structures and policies of the movement (Interviews, Dr A. Shabazz, 1996; Dr A. Salaam, 1995; Dr F. Muhammad, 1995). The following accounts of the respondents in my sample clearly explain what kind of factors played a role in defection, disengagement and schism in the movement since the late 1970s. For example, a 45 year old medical doctor who herself disengaged from both communities, the Imam's and Minister Farrakhan's, comments on the consequences of new teachings and policies and how they affected Muslims.

The Honourable Elijah Muhammad's death caused a few people to leave. But the vast majority who left did/do own the following 5 to 10 years due to disillusionment with changes under the leadership of Imam W. D. Mohammed. In the transition from the Nation to the American Muslim Mission significant believers individually and collectively left the community. It caused them to leave because they weren't ready to abandon the 'old' teachings (Respondent #5).

A 52 year old academics analyses the factors and reasons that played a significant role in defection and schism between the Imam and the Minister Farrakhan.

I think, differences in teachings, doctrines and politics. It was actually a combination of all of the above. There were political factors very obviously. There was something that, I guess you can call them theological teachings. I think it was more an attempt to try to maintain some continuity and cultural appreciation for contribution of the Honourable Elijah Muhammad. So there was little confusion on how much emphasis should be given to that versus trying to go into a mode of Islamic activity that was considered totally orthodox and totally traditional where the role and cultural contribution and political contributions that were unique and special to Muslims who came from the African American experience, from the slave experience. Some of that was felt by other people like with Farrakhan and some others, some of that was being pushed too far to the side and they felt may be that was too high price to pay, to try personally. I did not see it that way, personally myself and many other brothers and sisters felt that it was not impossible, it was not that difficult to reconcile both desires. I am saying that in this particular case (Minister Farrakhan's defection), part of conflict or part of schism between Farrakhan and W. D. Mohammed, centered around that issue the role that Elijah Muhammad had to play. Farrakhan's isolation, he felt his isolation. That's why there was probably also an element, natural politics involved in that as well. He was asked to leave to become the Minister of West side of Chicago which was considered may be a major demotion of one has been National spokesman and the one is pulled out the center where one has already worked ... (Interview, Dr. Farid Muhammad, 26 September 1995, verbatim).

To avoid a possible power base that would challenge the new leadership, on the request of national staff, the Imam brought Minister Farrakhan from a prestigious and powerful post at New York Mosque No 7 to Chicago where he was appointed to an insignificant area as Minister. This appointment, for those who were already unhappy as the direction the Imam was taking NOI was the beginning of the end and a significant number left. One of Farrakhan's close associates Munir Muhammed who is the founder of the CROE (Coalition Remembrance of Elijah) that collects archives and aims to keep alive and praise the works and teachings of Elijah Muhammed refers to Minister Farrakhan's demotion's was also one of the major factors for his own defection like other the old NOI members who were confused and dissatisfied with the Imam's radical reforms and changes.

Minister Farrakhan was the biggest victim of Wallace's [Imam W. D. Mohammed] reforms. From being the National Representative running the NOI's the most successful Mosque he was demoted to become the minister of a minor Mosque in the West Side of the Chicago. (Munir Muhammad, 1995 and interview #6, verbatim)

Munir Muhammad, giving his reasons for his own defection, says

We remember Wallace, the son of Elijah Muhammad, banned every book, tapes and speeches his father produced. All economic achievements he made collapsed ... I've tried to struggle to stay in the community but the pain was too great. So I left like everyone else left. We lost and confused so much. Because the Honorable Elijah Muhammad was no longer with us, no longer present among us so that to guide us ... (Interview, Munir Muhammad, 1995, verbatim).

Moreover, Minister Farrakhan's explanations of his own defection reminds us of Wilson's (1961) arguments that schism occurs among the influential elite of a religious movement. As an influential person, the National Spokesman in the hierarchy of the Elijah Muhammad's NOI Farrakhan explains,

as the son began to go away from the father's path then I said with the son and talked and we're in disagreement. But I would never go in public and speak against him. Because I knew that was not proper. So when I had a disagreement to the point where I could not continue to serve him then I left the movement entirely. And when I left the movement I left it to go back in show business. I didn't leave it to form a counter movement ... (Interview, Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

Prior to Minister Farrakhan's public announcement of his defection, Silis Muhammad declared 'Holy War' against the Imam's leadership in August 1977 that he was leaving the community and planning to form a movement in order to revitalise Elijah Muhammad's teachings and programmes (see S. Muhammad, 1985). From 1975 to 1978 while Imam W. D. Mohammed was busy introducing sweeping changes in the community, Minister Farrakhan travelled mainly abroad representing the Imam and movement. During this period he had the time and space to thinking through the consequences of those radical and fundamental changes in teachings, programmes and organisations that Elijah Muhammad instituted. In November 1977 Farrakhan made his expected public decision to leave the Imam's community during his public speech given at the Institute of Positive Education in Chicago (Madhubuti, 1978; L. Muhammad, 1977). He explained his reasons for leaving at his interviews to the press (Madhubuti, 1978; Russell, 1978).

I have visited Christian, Muslim, Socialist, Capitalist and Communist countries. Wherever I found a plurality of races, I consistently found the Black man on the bottom. This deepened my realization of a necessity for a specific message to Black people to remedy the many ills that we suffer (Mahubuti, 1978).

He further clarified his reasons for leaving referring to the reforms introduced to the community.

The effects of the changes within the World of Community of Islam, in addition to the information I gained about our people in my travel abroad, caused me to reassess the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, his teaching and program for Black people. My articulation of this caused Emam [Imam] W. D. Muhammad to announce to the entire Muslim body that I was no longer a person with whom the Muslims (WCIW) should associate, listen to ... (*Ibid*).

During my interview with Minister Farrakhan in 1996, he particularly focused on mainly the collapse of organisational patterns of the movement and the lost of communal spirit of believers were his reasons to rebuild the NOI.

I watched his [Imam W. D. Mohammed] and I watched the spirit of Muslims to denigrate, I watched the discipline to fall apart, I watched all economic advancements that we made to dissipate to nothing. I watched all of the schools that Elijah Muhammad had built closed one by one. And so I've decided that I would attempt to rebuild the work of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. There was only one other man with me at the time. And so we got together, none of us had any money but we began to rebuild the Nation of Islam according to the teachings and guidance of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad ... (Interview, Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

However the official policies of the new leadership were different from the old NOI's stances towards the dissidents and splinter groups (see Chapter III). Imam W. D. Mohammed seemed to display more tolerant and democratic attitudes than the old NOI leadership in the past. This shows an organisational maturity. He, for example, indicates the factors that caused schism between his leadership and other splinter groups of the NOI.

I think the main factor for the schism or division was em ... the interest that we devoted ourselves too. The following of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad was not all united upon the same interest. Em the majority of the members were united upon the fear of God, interested in right religion, they wanted a right religion. But a good number of them, their interest was the dignity of Black people, more respect for Black people, more recognition in the world for Black people ... If he [Minister Farrakhan] win back and took up the nationalistic idea again, the NOI, black nationalistic kind of idea. If he win back and represented that he would have a strong following ... And he was correct, there're always a strong minority that cared about Blackman's betterment or improvement of his image in the World ... They cared more about not the fear of God. So that's why I think caused the division, schism and different interest (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995b, verbatim).

When he became the leader he already had plans and convictions to make changes (see Chapter III). His priority was to change the religious teachings of the NOI that were directly in contrast with mainstream Islam.

I had a plan and vision before becoming the leader... The first thing I wanted to correct the idea of God, because Islam is 'Tauheed'. We believe in the Oneness of God ... I felt that right away I should tell our people that we have to be in agreement with the idea that is in the Qur'an... The next step was to bring the idea of prophethood in the line with the Qur'an ... We made a lot of changes to bring our people to the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) ... First thing is first. I believe that we should first get our minds in good shape. We had too many questions bothering our minds, so let's clear up our minds first. What's this religion really, let's clear our minds up first. Our minds would be freer to come back to business later, and do better in business. And that's exactly what it had happened. We have many businessmen and women too now in our association ... (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995b, verbatim).

In terms of the current splinter NOI groups and their leaders the Imam gives more importance to Minister Farrakhan. He says that,

What has come out of the Nation of Islam has been Black nationalist religious movements headed by Minister Farrakhan and by a few others who are not popular and well-known as charismatic leader that appeal to our people as Farrakhan such as my uncle John Muhammad and Silis Muhammad ... (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995b).

The Imam further makes comments of his and his community's official stance towards these splinter groups which reflect liberal and tolerant policies they also show the level of maturity as well.

I didn't encourage them to stay and I didn't encourage them to go, you know. They did their own. I didn't feel that I should beg them, ask them to stay apart that what I was doing very clear and right ... So I didn't follow them up, if they want to go they're free to go. But I didn't make trouble for them, if they left I didn't make trouble for them. (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995a).

However, when Minister Farrakhan's defection become public and the press gave coverage of it, the Imam appealed to him to return to the community (see *Bilalian News*, 28 April, 1978). In addition to the above clear and open splits and defections, interesting developments happened mostly among academics and professionals who joined the NOI during Elijah Muhammad's era; they made sometimes favourable and sometimes critical remarks of these communities' leaders and their policies. A 56 year old Muslim academic accounts for his and most of his colleagues' position towards the Imam's and Minister Farrakhan's communities.

Most of my colleagues and I became dissatisfied with Imam W. D. Mohammed's politics. Because he is so close to American political establishments. We did not like also some of his organizational strategies. But we respect his good works that brought us to a clear understanding of Al-Islam. With Minister Farrakhan, my and my colleague disagreements are his insistence to teach the NOI's mythological teachings, Yakub story, creation etc., but we are supportive his organization's positive programs such as self-sufficiency, protect and save our young people from crime, drug and alcohol ⁽⁵⁾ (Interview #8, paraphrased).

Another Muslim academic also raises similar points.

Imam W. D. Mohammed support of the U.S. government's dealings in the east, the U.S. Governments, CIA and FBI department disconcerted a lot of Muslims who were once in his group. The good works of Imam W. D. Mohammed and Farrakhan are held in high esteem but, there are other deeds and positions that is not agreed upon. There is no blind-fold acceptance of either Ameer by those of my mind-set. We respect them both, but reserve the Islamic right to think for ourselves! Therefore, we accept and support certain positions and reject others (Interview Dr. A. Shabazz, 1995b, verbatim).

Similar comments and attitudes are expressed by Dr. F. Muhamad and Dr. A. Salaam (interviews). However, these Muslim academics and professionals played a constructive role in initiating reconciliation process among the AAM communities in 1990s. In 1989 they established the National Islamic Assembly (NIA) aiming to bring all believers to gather regardless of their theological and political differences (Interview, Dr. F. Muhammad; see Muwakkil, 1989). These developments will be examined in the next section.

7.4. Reconstruction, Co-existence and Reconciliation

As indicated in the previous section all the present NOI splinter groups claim to be either the legitimate successor to Elijah Muhammad's throne, the NOI or its authentic resurrection and each uses its original name with a slight difference (see the endnote 4). However, as Lincoln rightly points out that, 'the lion's share of the Wallace reformation went to Louis Farrakhan, whose Nation is based in Chicago and whose followers are found throughout America' (Lincoln, 1994:267), and in the Caribbean, Britain, France and West Africa (see Tinaz, 1998, 1999).

Minister Louis Farrakhan was born Louis Eugene Walcott in the Bronx, NY on 11 May 1933. He is the son of West Indian immigrant and grew up in Boston as a devout Episcopalian. His mother was Mae Clark from St. Kitts in the Caribbean and his father whom he never met. His mother was a supporter of Marcus Garvey and gave him racial pride and identity consciousness. He graduated from Boston Latin School with honors and he studied two years music educational Winston-Salem-Teachers College in North Carolina. Louis was recruited into the NOI by Malcolm X while he was working at various nightclubs where he was known as the Charmer in the mid-1950s. He was trained by Malcolm X and appointed Minister of Muhammad's Temple No 11 in Boston. (Interview Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996). When Malcolm defected from the NOI in 1964, Farrakhan was appointed to Malcolm's post at Harlem Mosque No 7. Later he became the National Spokesman of Elijah Muhammad and the NOI (Lincoln, 1994).

Minister Farrakhan maintains that Elijah Muhammad implied that he had chosen him as his successor and the proof was in his success at rebuilding and restoring the works and teachings of his leader.

Here we are today. And I would say to you that Elijah Muhammad did choose me as his successor. And I did not feel strong enough and if I had challenged Warith Deen at that time for leadership it would have split the House and bloodshed would have scattered us. And so since I didn't think I knew what next steps should be I submitted myself to him and followed him until I felt I could not follow him any longer (Interview, Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

As indicated in the previous section, Farrakhan accepted his reassignment from the prestigious NOI's New York Mosque No 7 to an insignificant place on the West Side of Chicago. This demotion was an insult to a person who had had the position of second in command during the Elijah Muhammad's leadership from 1965 to 1975. His long tour to Africa and Caribbean gave him time to ponder on the Imam W. D. Mohammed's changes and his observations on the socio-economic conditions of Black people in various systems invoked him to reassess the works and teachings of Elijah Muhammad. Upon his return to US he raised his disillusionment and dissatisfaction over the reforms with the Imam. He was confused and in a dilemma over whether to leave the movement entirely or return to the entertainment business. At that time, his close associate, Jabril Muhammad's (formerly Bernard Cushmeer) book, *This is the One Messenger Elijah Muhammad. We Need Not Look for Another* provided Minister Farrakhan with guidance and direction. With like-minded dissidents in Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Florida he secretly held meetings and finally on November 8, Farrakhan felt confident enough to officially announce his plan to rebuild the NOI according to the teachings and programmes of Elijah Muhammad (Madhubuti, 1978; Russell 1978, Gardell, 1996). Farrakhan compares the injustice done to him with regards to the succession with the case in the history of the Jewish people. He tries to legitimise his position by giving examples of his successes in rebuilding the NOI in the name of Elijah Mohammed.

That book was (Jabril Muhammad's book) written about the life of Jesus, Isa. And there was a passage in that book that dealt with Hanakar, the celebration of Jews. And a man by the name of Antiocas in Jewish history. And if you recall in the Jewish history Antiocas Hypaphenis was one of sons of the King but, he was not the one to succeed the throne. And with manipulation and deceit he got to the throne. And when he took over the throne, the first thing he did was to ban all the Jewish literature, close all Jewish schools, he slaughtered the pig on the altar and caused the deceleration of the community of Jews. And then Judas Macabeis grows. Macabeis and they fought against Antiocas. And they took back the Temple and they purified it within eight-day celebrations. And that formed the basis of Jewish holiday that's called Hanakar, which is observed around the same time as Christians' Christmas. Now when I've read that I knew that

the father (Elijah Mohammed) had chosen me. And others knew it too. And the proof that the father had chosen me as you can see the work that I've done in the name of the father bears witness that he knew what he had put in me. I didn't know I was not aware. But because of the NOI was all but completely destroyed. It forced me to think in terms of rebuilding the father's work. And so we've got started. But this thing that I noticed the similarity was that Elijah Muhammed's books were banned from our reading, the Universities of Islam were closed and later they're opened up under the name of his mother, Clara Muhammad, peace be upon her. So, when I saw that and I saw the parallel in history. That's my point. And I began like the Macabeis to rebuild the work. And one of the things that Macabeis had to do was to recapture the Temple and Jerusalem. And so a part of our work was to go back and regain the mosque and if you look at us we have regained all of the Nation's properties... As so my effort is to rebuild his works (Elijah Muhammed) and his people according to a plan that we believe was given to him by Allah (Interview Minister L Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

The full and detailed historical developments of these two communities have been discussed at length in several studies such as (Lee, 1988; Mamiya, 1983; Lincoln, 1994; Gardell, 1996; Tinaz, 1996) Here I would like to review briefly the important developments.

In the first year following his defection when Minister Farrakhan's reconstruction efforts to rebuild the NOI were released to the press (Sheppard 1978a; Russell, 1978). He received harsh criticism from Imam W.D. Mohammed's community (*Bilalian News*, April 28, 1978). The Imam dismissed Farrakhan's mission as reactionary and said that it contradicted Elijah Muhammed's plans for his people. Unlike the past experiences of the NOI these early tense relations did not create conflict among the followers of these two groups (see Chapter III).

However, in the early 1980s, Farrakhan was blamed for trying to recruit followers from the old NOI members who were once affiliated with the Imam's community (Smith, 1984). Through negotiation the two groups calmed down some tense moments. As Lee (1988) states these two contending AAM communities entered into a process of agreeing to co-exist.

In 1981, Farrakhan's resurrected NOI held its first Saviour's Day convention. Farrakhan introduced a new ritual practice to his NOI, an annual celebration of Elijah Muhammad's birthday on 7 October besides resurrecting old NOI's traditional Saviour's Day celebration of the birthday of W.D. Fard on 26 February, the founder of the NOI in the early 1930s (Gardell, 1996). Further Elijah Muhammed was elevated to divine status as a Messiah.

In 1983 the relations between the Imam and the Minister's communities became tense again when both sides' theologians and writers attacked each other in seeking a religious legitimacy to a real Islam and the tradition of Elijah Muhammad (El-Amin, 1991; Sharif, 1985; J. Mohammed, 1984). Rumours started spreading in the AA community that both groups were on the edge of war against each other. These tense moments were tempered by the two leaders meeting and making a peace treaty pledging that each group should not verbally attack the other (A.W. Mohammed, 1983; Smith, 1984). This civilised conduct prevented possible tense relations in the near future.

Muslim officials in both communities appreciate their peaceful co-existence since the major schism occurred in 1977. Minister Farrakhan says that,

I am happy to say that even though Imam Warith Deen Mohammed and I have theological disagreements. Yet God has blessed me to bring the NOI back after its destruction by the US government and internal and external forces without so much as the bloody nose of conflict between Imam Warith Deen and his followers and those of us who chose to follow the path of his father ... (Interview Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

On the other hand, Aisha Mustapha, editor of *Muslim Journal*, makes similar comments.

Even Minister Farrakhan has acknowledged that being a larger splinter group on the Nation that there has been a level core units maintained that they've not been any moment of erupted violence from each group. I think from the media, from those who were observers they anticipated that a war expecting that, but it has never happened (Interview, Aisha Mustapha, 1999).

7.4.1. Farrakhan, Jewish People and Media

Minister Farrakhan did not become a national figure until the 1984 presidential campaign of Reverend Jesse Jackson. The four occasions which contributed to the rise in his popularity, were:

First, when the Jewish Defence League (JDL) began negative campaigning against Jesse Jackson's announcement of a presidential bid because of his connection and meeting with Arab leaders such as the Syrian President Hafiz al-Assad and PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organisation) leader Yasser Arafat during his delegation to Syria in which

Minister Farrakhan took part, to release the captured U.S. Navy pilot Lt. Robert O. Goodman. When the JDL increased its negative campaign and threats against his life, Jackson asked the Secret Service for protection. The Secret Service was reluctant to provide protection for him, so Minister Farrakhan provided his soldiers, the FOI, instead and warned the JDL at the NOI 1984 Saviour's Day convention. Farrakhan told the audience, 'when you attack him, you are attacking one million that are lined up behind him. You are attacking all of us [all blacks in the U.S.]. If you harm this brother, I warn you in the name of Allah, this will be the last one you harm' (Gardell, 1996:250). Because Farrakhan interpreted the candidacy of Jackson in messianic terms, as seeing him 'he's on a mission from God' (*Ibid*).

The second occasion was when Milton Coleman, the Black reporter of the *Washington Post*, leaked to the press Jackson's off-the-record conversations in which he described Jews and New York as 'Hymies' and 'Hymietown' referring to Jewish people with special self-interests in Israel. These statements were printed just before the New Hampshire primary although they were made earlier. In an attempt to defend Jesse Jackson, Farrakhan used controversial language to warn Coleman, saying that 'we're going to make an example of Milton Coleman ... at this point no physical harm. One day soon we will punish with death... we will come to power right inside this country one day soon...(Gardell, 1996:251). However, Farrakhan later made conciliatory statements about the style of language that he used but these remarks were ignored by the media (*Ibid*). Here it is not my intention to and also it is beyond the scope of this study to examine and analyse, in detail, the statements, verbal attacks and developments that emerged between Minister L. Farrakhan and Jewish organisations since these developments have already been discussed in full in the works of Gardell (1996) and Magida (1996)⁶. Instead I would like to indicate the role of the media in these developments where it approached these issues in pragmatist ways.

The third and the most misquoted and decontextualised occasion occurred in April 1984 when angry JDL supporters called Farrakhan, 'Hitler' and those Jewish people supporting Jackson's presidential bid 'Nazi Lovers'. Farrakhan responded to this labelling, saying

Here come the Jews don't like Farrakhan, so they call me Hitler. Well, that's good name. Hitler was a great man. He wasn't great for me as a black person, but he was a great German. Now, I'm not proud of Hitler's evils against Jewish people, but that's a matter of record. He raised Germany up from nothing. Well, in a sense you could say there's a similarity in that we're raising our people up from nothing. But don't compare me with your wicked killer (cited from Gardell, 1996:252).

The media ignored the whole content of the speech and decontextualised it but focused on the word 'great', 'Hitler was great' and they gave more publicity and portrayed Farrakhan as 'hatred'. It also ignored Farrakhan's later speeches where he made another statements on Hitler, 'what man would be praise Hitler...Hitler hated Jews. Hitler hated blacks with a passion. Why should I praise Hitler' (Gardell, 1996:252).

The last occasion was in late June 1984, when Farrakhan made controversial statements about Israel and Judaism. He referred to the creation of Israel as 'an outlaw act' and to Judaism as a 'dirty' or a 'gutter religion'. These kinds of impulsive statements are wrong and not defensible whatever religious and moral tradition they are about. However, nine year later Minister Farrakhan admitted during an interview with Magida that his statements about the religion, Judaism, were not correct and apologised for using the phrase, "dirty religion". He said,

It was "not appropriate ... It was my mistake". Judaism could not be "dirty", Farrakhan explained, "because Islam came from the same God". "Dirty religion" had referred not to Jews' religion but to specific actions of the Israeli government against Palestinian children" (Magida, 1996:149)

But his statements have provided rich material to the media for a long time and it still continues to use them. He further extended his criticisms to religious traditions, Christianity as well as Islam, and other people 'dirty' when he believed they had strayed from the tenets of their faith and used religion to justify their political and personal practices.

I am a Muslim. I respect Moses. I respect the revelation Moses was sent with to the children of Israel. How can I dare condemn what God send down as unclean? It was thus not Judaism as such, but the practices of certain Jews...The unclean is our action hiding behind God's name, Jesus' name, Mohammed's name, but we're killing and destroying each other in the name of God (Gardell, 1996:255).

Moving from Israel, Farrakhan referred to other religious-based conflicts such as Northern Ireland, the Iran-Iraq war (Gardell, 1996:255). He included in his criticism other racial and ethnic communities such as Koreans, Vietnamese and Immigrant Arab

Muslim who trade in the black neighbourhoods and blamed them for exploiting the Blacks by opening Liquor Shops and Corner Stores in the black neighbourhood (Tinaz, 1996). The media either did not follow or ignored subsequent developments but rather it continued to portray Farrakhan in a stagnant and sensational way as an 'Anti-Semitic', 'bigot', 'hatred' and 'demagogue'. These kinds media treatments of a religious leader and movement are seen in Beckford's (1995) and Richardson's (1996) contentions with regard to the media/press approaches to the NRMs which are sensationalists, one-sided, biased and misinformed in their perspective. This derives from the different focuses of their interests. Beckford, for example, compares the approaches of the media and social scientists towards religious organisations as 'short-term vs. long-term; practical vs. theoretical; and episodic vs. continuous' (Beckford, 1995:100).

The following developments support my arguments of the media approaches. The media has never changed its initial portrayal of Minister Farrakhan. He has been seeking to improve relations with Jewish people and making conciliatory remarks since the early 1990s. But the media did not give enough coverage of these developments. In April 1993, with his violin, he tried to send a message by playing F. Mendelssohn's violin concerto, a famous Jewish composer, where he talked of reconciliation with America's Jews (Holland, 1993). Farrakhan continued to clarify his views and attempted reconciliation with Jewish people. At a 3 February, 1994, news conference, Farrakhan said 'I denounce anti-Semitism in all its forms and manifestations ... I believed that I were an anti-Semite, meaning somebody who hates somebody else simply because of their faith, I would be unfit to call myself a servant of God' (Novak, 1997b). After the Million Man March (MMM) on 16 October 1995, he further expressed his willingness to establish a dialogue with Jewish leaders and organisations. Since the MMM, a handful of prominent Jews publicly called for the community to take Farrakhan up on his repeated appeals for a meeting with Jewish leaders. In 1996 on CBS's *60 Minutes*, Farrakhan told Mike Wallace, 'I'm not anti-Semitic. I don't hate Jews' (Novak, 1997b). After that programme, the head of the World Jewish Congress, Edgar Bronfman, hosted Farrakhan and his wife at a dinner in his New York home. But Bronfman soon cut off contact with Farrakhan (Beiser, 1997). In 1996, in an interview with African-American Professor Henry L. Gates, Jr., Farrakhan surprised him by

stating that he might have some Jewish connections, claiming that his paternal grandparents were Portuguese Jews. He said, 'I believe that in my blood, and not in a bad way, because when I was a little boy I used to listening to the Jewish cantors in Boston ... (Gates, 1996). The following year, in an interview with *Jerusalem Reporter* Vince Beiser, Farrakhan praised Jewish people for their contribution to humanity and civilisation.

Jews are leaders in every field of human endeavor, not only in this country, but in every country where Jews live. In spite of the negatives against the Jewish people, because of wisdom of God through his prophets through the Children of Israel, because of your cultural heritage, because of your unity, you have been able to survive even in those countries where you have been persecuted. Yes, I admire that. Any intelligent human being who is not bigoted would admire the accomplishments of the Jewish people. You're world leaders (Beiser, 1997)

These sort statements could be considered as flattery, but they might also reflect some genuine intentions. Even he criticised the book, *The Secret Relationships Between Blacks and Jews*, prepared by the NOI research committee in order to defend him against the JDL and the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) attacks (Gates, 1996). The first positive response to Farrakhan's appeals came from Philadelphia's Jewish mayor, Edward Rendell, in April 1997. The mayor invited him to speak at a rally to promote racial and ethnic reconciliation in the city. The Minister appeared at the rally and described co-operation with the mayor as 'a good sign that could lead to a wider dialogue with other prominent Jews' (Janofsky, 1997).

Another similar development happened in November 1999. In contrast to ADL's constant dismissal of Farrakhan's offer of reconciliation (Gardell, 1996), a high profile group of officials of the ultra-orthodox Hasidic Jewish sect held a meeting with Farrakhan in November 1999 at the NOI's Black House in Chicago (*the Final Call*, November 30, 1999). The aim was to open a dialogue to remove misunderstanding and work together for a common cause. This was a symbolic step towards closer relations between Farrakhan and the Jewish people in the US. This dialogue has further strengthened since the Rabbis of this sect joined with Christian Church leaders and mainstream Muslim organisations' leaders at the NOI Saviour's Day 2000 celebration in Chicago. However, all these developments have gone unreported in the mainstream media. The media's harsh sensational criticisms of Farrakhan have led to an increase in his audiences, supporters, members and popularity among the dissatisfied young Blacks

since the mid-1980s. Even the media's treatments of Minister Louis Farrakhan and the NOI increased curiosity and sympathy towards him and his NOI in the Black Diaspora outside the USA, in Caribbeans, West Africa and Western Europe. This seems to have contributed the expansion and impacts of his organisation beyond the North America and it became as a global ethno-religious movement. Since the late 1980s, his NOI's influence has been felt in the Western Europe, particularly in the UK and France and attracted significant number of dissatisfied Africans and Caribbeans to the movement (Tinaz, 1998, 1999, 2001).

7.4.2. Moving to the Mainstream: Socio-economic and Political Factors

Every social movement sooner or later develops its own social, political and economic philosophy. If the group fails to form them collectively in society where it arose during the life time of a charismatic leader, it is done by an individual or a group of people in the next generation of the movement, either to accommodate with the dominant society's system or to carry on the exclusivist political and economic philosophy of the first generation of the movement. Unlike Elijah Muhammad's political escapisms, separatism, quietism and economic exclusivist and self help communal policies,⁷ (see Chapter III, Malcolm X section), in the post-Elijah era two contending AAM leaders, Imam W. D. Mohammed and Minister L. Farrakhan introduced new political and economic policies that tended to display an accommodationist and, to some extent, integrationist characters, particularly Imam W. D. Mohammed is concerned. Both leaders have been moving towards mainstream American economic and political life. However, while the former launched his move radically to mainstream American societal, economic and political values from the mid-1970s onwards the latter entered in the process and has gradually moving towards mainstreaming since the late 1980s or the early 1990s, sometimes displaying critical stance and sometimes accommodationist.

As social or religious movements develop in social and cultural environments, their relations with the surrounding society some times dramatically and sometimes gradually change (Zald, 1970; Wilson, 1973). The developments in the NOI and its associate

groups since the mid-1970s indicate that these groups have been in the process of institutionalisation displaying their gradual move to mainstream society.

7.4.2.1. Imam W. D. Mohammed's Political and Economic Policies

Imam W. D. Mohammed explains the fundamental shift of his policies from the Elijah Muhammad tradition.

Now, it's different. The Honorable Elijah Muhammad was a product of ugly time and climate in this country for our people. As he grew older, so conditions improved for Black people in America he softened his own position. He wasn't hard ... he changed a lot. He changed quite a bit in the early 1970s ... And that was the intelligent thing to do. He recognised the circumstances have changed that the harsh environment, discrimination, segregation, abuse, mistreatment of the Black people in the South that had gone. That was over. So he had to recognise the change.⁸ When I asked and authorize Muslims in our associations to register to vote and take active role in politics, I thought it was the next step he was going to ... (Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995b, verbatim).

At the 1976 Saviour's day celebration, the Imam authorised all members of his community to register to vote in local and federal elections. Moreover, the movement officially endorsed candidates, mostly from the Democrat Party. Having noticed this fertile electoral constituency political parties began courting the votes of those called, at that time, the 'Black Muslims'. In return, the Muslim officials intended to benefit from backing these Black politicians (Weisman, 1976). These practical political policies were new for those who had joined the NOI during Elijah Muhammad's leadership and they were also fundamental changes from its long time political absentism and quietism. Another surprising change introduced into the political sphere was patriotism. The Imam has embarked on a refreshingly new commitment to patriotism in America. To demonstrate a genuine policy of the movement the Muslim officials decided to wave the American Flag at each Masjid and institution affiliated with the group and the flag began to be displayed on stage at all meetings in the community. The first New World Patriotism Day Parade was held in Chicago on July 4, 1977. Since then all Muslims have been encouraged to take part in the celebrations of New World Patriotism Day Parade in major cities of America (Sharif, 1985:117-19; Sheppard, 1978b). Moreover, Imam W. D. Mohammed brought a new dimension to the American Constitution. He said that 'the language and spirit of the Constitution of the United States is too valuable for us to allow them to die' (Sharif, 1985:117).

In the economic sphere, as indicated earlier in his reforms, the Imam privatised all communal business enterprises of the movement because of their mismanagement and loss of money. Having been inspired by his father's, Elijah Muhammad, 'economic blueprints' and 'do for self' teachings and programmes (E. Muhammad, 1965), Imam W. D. Mohammed introduced in the 1980s two economic programmes; one was the 'Collective Buying Program' and the other was 'the American Muslim Mission Committee to Purchase 100,000 Commodities (AMMCOP)' (Bilal, 1981; Sharif, 1985; Mustapha, 1988). However, these two programmes were unlike the old NOI's style of economic policies, they were not centralised and monitored from the central authority, but they were locally run by Muslim officials for the interest of the communities. Under these programmes, the Muslims buy large quantities of clothes, shoes, fish, appliance, etc. at wholesale prices and sell them in their local communities across the US (Sharif, 1985; Bunn, 1983). With these policies, they created more competitive businesses and individual business people in the community. In the 1990s, the AAMs affiliated with the Imam's MAS or Ministry of Imam W. Deen Mohammed still advocates these economic co-operative policies. The Imam encourages the Muslims in his associations to undertake more collective and co-operative business investments (Saleem, 1998; N. Muhammad, 1998; Jones, 1998). A local Imam contrasts Muslims' business successes with the old practices of the NOI and Farrakhan's.

He [Imam W. D. Mohammed] is strong advocate of business developments. And I think that it should be understood that what Minister Farrakhan is doing there as our past economic policies, facilities, soap, trucks, restaurants ... business developments ... We have [Muslims in the Imam's associations] now individuals who that many trucks, one person. We have persons who owns restaurants, groceries, supermarkets ... and have very successful businesses ... the individual business developments, enterprises improved greatly under Imam W. D. Mohammed's leadership and guidance ... (Interview, Imam R. Mubashir, 1995, verbatim).

These socio-economic improvements of Muslims' were self-reported by the respondents in my study (see Chapter V) and their current occupational statuses draw similar parallels.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Imam W. D. Mohammed encouraged Muslims in his associations to participate in and engage actively in domestic politics, both at local and federal levels. In August 1984, the Imam's community held its first Political Awareness Convention in Washington, D.C. In the early 1990s, he made an astonishing political

policy statement when he supported the US Gulf War policies. This surprised not only the immigrant Muslims in US and but also the AAM communities. The Imam received criticisms from mostly the AAMs for his pro-American international policy against a Muslim country, Iraq (Muwakkil, 1991). Unlike the Imam's policies, Minister Farrakhan showed different reactions towards American policies that I will briefly indicate later. During my field research the Imam explained to me his political objectives on this specific event.

What's important, what's important is that we be sincere Muslims and that we have the interest, the good interest of Muslims, not here only here America but throughout the world. We have that interest in our hearts and that we respect that respect our religion, respect Muslims of the World. And we want for them the best life possible on this earth. If that's in our hearts then God will guide us to direct right decision. I believe I made the right decision when I chose to support Saudi Arabia and Kuwait against Iraq and Saddam. I think I made the right decision ... Saddam's case was partism. That's what we felt. That's what we believed. Saddam, he wasn't leader for Muslims and all he sudden he wanted to say he's the leader for all Muslims. He wanted to lead the Jihad for the Muslims of the World, you know. We couldn't believe him, we couldn't trust him ... But some different with me, a lot of them, in fact, more communities in America different with me then agreed with me ... It wasn't an easy decision to stand on the side, America's presence in the Sacred Land, in our land, in the Muslim land of Arabia ... (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995b, verbatim).

In 1992, Imam W. D. Mohammed made another interesting move. He became the first Muslim to lead the opening prayer at the U.S. Senate. This was a step further into mainstream American society where the AAMs under his associations seek a political role and aim to be a pro-American bridge between the US and the Muslim World (A Look at Imam W. Deen Mohammed, 1993; Witham, 1992). With the Imam's instructions, Muslim officials and professionals associated with his MAS formed an platform called the Coalition for Good Government (CGG) in order to participate in domestic policies and even run for governmental offices. The CGG consists of 15 Muslim professionals who serve in important governmental and political positions throughout the US¹⁰ (Sharif, 1999). The editor of *the Muslim Journal*, the community's newspaper, Aisha Mustapha explains Muslims' political roles.

He [Imam W. D. Mohammed] has encouraged Muslims to participate politically even run for offices. And now we have an organisation called the Coalition for Good Government ... It is a nation-wide. They're made up of elected officials. It might be like city council elected, are they may behalf elected judges ... We have also a Mayor city, we had a Muslim that's a Deputy Mayor ... (Interview, Aisha Mustapha, 1999, verbatim).

Finally, Imam W. D. Mohammed comments on current and future roles of Muslims in US politics.

It's growing and really I think it's promising. The future looks good ... we have some areas more progress for Muslims in politics than others but in all areas. I think we're looking very good. Muslims have a big share of the government offices, government posts ... We're growing so strong, in the South, in the East and the North and in California also making a good showing. So I think, generally we can say the situation is very good in the US for Muslims in politics. And recently, nationalised Muslims [immigrant Muslims] have joined us and some of them are making more progress than we're making, Pakistanis in Chicago, Arabs in Michigan. They're doing very good ... (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995b, verbatim).

7.4.2.2. Minister L. Farrakhan's Political and Economic Policies

Unlike the Imam's radical reforms and policies, minister Farrakhan has followed a different path that reflects gradualism. He began this process in the late 1980s onwards in both religious and political areas (Interview, M. Rufai, 1995).

As discussed earlier in 'Farrakhan and Jewish People', Minister Farrakhan did not become involved in politics until 1984 with Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign. He remained loyal to his teacher's, Elijah Muhammad, political policies and stance up to this political event. Prior to that right after his defection from the Imam's community, when he intended to rebuild the NOI, Minister Farrakhan expressed his new goals to Madhubuti and asked his assistance to establish greater relations in the Black community. He said 'his goal was to involve the nation with the larger Black community. His vision was much in line with those of many in Chicago's Black political and cultural community' (Madhubuti, 1994:81). With Jesse Jackson's presidential bid, he seized a good opportunity and broke away from the strict attachment to Elijah Muhammad's policies as far as politics is concerned. In February 1984 Saviour's Day, he asked his hundreds of followers to register to vote and also urge other Black nationalist and political movements to do so in order to support Jackson's bid (Strausberg, 1984). However, as indicated earlier, his enthusiasm in politics did not last long because of the controversies surrounding his statements of Jewish people and the media's allegations.

Instead, in the mid-1980s, like Elijah Muhammad, Farrakhan gave more priority to the social, economic and moral teachings of the NOI, hoping to improve the socio-economic conditions of AAs. For that purpose, he launched a programme known a

POWER (People Organized and Working for Economic Rebirth). The aim of the programme is that to put

the consumer together with black producer in a way that gives us [AAs] both equal benefits, through a system of distribution that we set up. That we become the producer, we are the distributor, we are the consumer, and the money stays our circle. Then we can build our own community up and become a strong and powerful people right within the land where we were sold as slaves ... (Farrakhan, 1989:156).

To generate funds for his POWER programme, Minister Farrakhan's NOI launched a nation-wide campaign by selling its products such as tapes, books, cleaning materials, toiletries, etc. However, with the NOI's limited resources, it was impossible to maintain this economic programme. His cordial relations with Colonel Qadhdhafi, the president of Libya, the NOI secured to receive a controversial \$5 million dollar, interest-free loan in 1985 (Black, 1986; Monroe and Schwartz, 1987). In the Early 1970s, Qadhdhafi also financially helped the NOI during Elijah Muhammad's era to ease the movement's economic programmes and financial difficulties (see Chapter I, Tinaz, 1973). It has to be noted here that Qadhdhafi's financial supports were far from religious and Islamic causes. They were rather to support nationalist, protest and political and revolutionary movements, which stood up against the Western governments and powers.

In 1986, Minister Farrakhan toured the Muslim countries of Libya, Syria, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates seeking recognition of the NOI as a legitimate Islamic movement in the West and political and religious ties with the Muslim World. While Imam W. D. Mohammed gave more importance to establishing good relations with moderate heads of Muslim countries Farrakhan seemed to prefer to build ties with the revolutionary leaders of Muslim and African States such as Libya, Sudan, Syria, Ghana (Tinaz, 1993). However, his tour of the Muslim countries in the hope of building closer ties created controversy in the US international politics rather than adding to the religious vision in the teachings of Minister Farrakhan. When US relations with Libya became very tense in 1986 after the discotheque bombing in Germany, where several US military personal died, which subsequently led to the American bombing of Libya suspecting that Libya was behind this incident. Farrakhan vehemently condemned it. He relates this event with his experience he had in Mexico where he saw a vision, and met

and talked to Elijah Muhammad in a spacecraft called 'Mother Wheel', 'Mother Ship' or 'the Ezekiel's Wheel'.¹¹ He says,

I'm sure you've heard something of an experience that I had while I was in little village in Mexico that you've read about this experience that I had where I was spoken to by Elijah Muhammad given certain information that proved to be very very accurate. That information that Reagan had met with the Joint Chief of Staff and had planned a war. He didn't tell me who the war was against. But I've later learned or believed that that war was against Muammar Qadhafi. So I went to Libya to warn Qadhafi of Reagan's intentions. Shortly, thereafter, Reagan bombed Tripoli killing Qadhafi's adopted daughter and wounding some members of his household and killing over a hundred persons ... (Interview, Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

Farrakhan further relates that this vision was an inspiration for him to organise the Million Man March (MMM). This will be discussed by the end of this section.

From 1986 onwards Minister Farrakhan began gradually to regain the old NOI properties as a result of the relative success of his economic programmes. In 1986, Imam W. D. Mohammed's community lost a case in the probate court. In 1979, three illegitimate children of Elijah Muhammad by his secretaries filed a suit to recover all assets of the old NOI inherited to the Imam's organisation. After a long legal battle, the court ruled out in favour of the Elijah Muhammad Estate, the Progressive Land Developers. The legal battle further extended to other assets of the old NOI and the court's decision led to Imam W. D. Mohammed's community declaring bankruptcy. Here, it is not my intention to give further details about these legal cases between the families of Elijah Muhammad, those who were born from Clara Muhammad and those who are secretaries and their children. An account of this decade-long legal battle can be found in the following (Brune and Ylisela, 1991; Mount 1986; Strausberg, 1986; Omar, 1987a, b, c).

Farrakhan's NOI bought most of the old NOI's properties from the Imam's community including residential Palaces in Chicago and Phoenix and the most significant one Elijah Muhammad Masjid on Stony Island in South Side of Chicago. Minister Farrakhan considers his NOI's successful regaining of all properties of the movement from Elijah Muhammad's time were meaningful signs that he is the legitimate successor of the Elijah (Jackson, 1995; Jackson and Gains, 1995). He says that,

So part of our work was to go back and regain the Mosque. And If you look at us we have regained all the Nation's properties just about without firing a shot, without ugly dialogue of bitterness and we bought back from Imam Warith Deen Mohammed ... We raised cash bought the Mosque ... this home [Chicago Black House, the leader's residence] and Mr Muhammad's home in Phoenix ... we purchased the farm in Georgia ... So my effort is to rebuild his [Elijah Muhammad] and his people according to a plan that we believe was given to him by Allah (Interview, Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

By the end of 1988, Minister Farrakhan fully resurrected the NOI to the original teachings and organisations of the Elijah Muhammad. He restored many of the businesses and institutions, following Elijah's 'economic blueprints'. In 1979, he established the NOI's newspaper, *the Final Call*. The name of the paper has derived from the first newspaper of the movement when the NOI emerged in the early 1930s in Detroit during W. D. Fard's era (Interview, Dr A. Salaam, 1995b). In 1988, the Minister reopened the Mosque Maryam (see Chapter VII for giving the name of the mosque) as both the Chicago Muslims's home Mosque and the NOI National Center. He also reopened the educational institution, the University of Islam, under the name of Muhammad's University of Islam, from kindergarten through high school, where students are taught separately according to principles and teachings of the NOI (Interviews, Shelby Muhammad, 1995; M. Rufai, 1995).

By the late 1980s, the NOI continued its steady growth both organisationally and the number of its membership, using a variety of recruitment tactics such as huge public speaking programmes, the media, its own literature and hip-hop music, etc (Gardell, 1996:139-141). This expansion necessitated a bureaucratic administration. Assuming that the NOI is a nation within a Nation, Farrakhan established a bureaucratic organisational structure modelling as a state with departments of international relations, health, education, administration, defence-security, prison, justice and youth, each headed by a minister (Jackson and Gaines, 1995a; Gardell, 1996:142).

However, from the late 1980s onwards, the NOI entered a new phase, gradualism in terms of economic and political policies that tended to move towards the mainstream politics and economics of the US. After the 1984 presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson, Minister Farrakhan appeared to seek a larger role in the US domestic politics and the economy from 1988 onwards. In 1988, the NOI established several security agencies (Jackson and Gaines, 1995b). These agencies won contracts with the local and

federal departments of government in several states involving patrolling crime and drug infected areas in big cities. The NOI's FOI members or soldiers managed to clean up the streets of drug trafficking, prostitution and crime where even sometimes government and state police and security forces failed to make any headway. The NOI extended its security contracts to housing projects by making a deal with US Department of Housing and Urban Development to protect urban residents where the majority of them were AAs and to attempt to bring a atmosphere of security (Walsh, *et al*, 1988; Monroe, 1990; Wright and Glick, 1990; Loeb, 1995). For its successful patrolling, the NOI has received great respect and acceptability not only from conventional Black organisations and leaders but also from local and federal political institutions (McCall, 1989; Torque, *et al*, 1993). Consequently, with the positive contribution to civic affairs, the images of the NOI and Minister Farrakhan have begun to change and improve in the early years of the 1990s. Farrakhan, accordingly, tried to reach out both Black and White mainstream middle class leaders and organisations by toning down and moderating his rhetoric regarding Jewish and White people and hoping to seek larger role in the US politics (McCall, 1990a; Torque, *et al*, 1993). Going further, the NOI officials desired to take an active role in local and federal politics (McCall, 1990b).

Consequently, Minister Farrakhan's NOI did not only receive respect and recognition from mainstream black leaders and political and civic authorities as a result of its contribution to society the movement has also well established itself economically. Through Farrakhan's economic programme, POWER, and mostly through the security and housing contracts, the NOI created economic power base right inside the Black America (Jackson and Gains, 1995b).

To the contrary to Imam W. D. Mohammed's policy, during the Gulf Crisis in the early 1990s, Minister Farrakhan denounced the Bush administration's troop deployment. In the December 10, 1990 issue of *the Final Call*, he harshly criticised US Gulf policy saying that 'Blacks, native Americans, Hispanics ... and even poor White boys and girls to fight a war that was motivated only by 'greed, material gain and keep people in power who bow down the will of America' (Reed, 1991:54). However, in criticising

American policy, he was cautious not to alienate any possible Arab or Muslim source of good will.

The most important developments in the early 1990s was that conventional Black leaders and politicians, and civil right organisations expressed their desires to build a dialogue with Minister Farrakhan when *Time* magazine showed rising popularity of him among AAs, particularly among youths (*Time*, 28 February, 1994). They wanted to include Farrakhan and his NOI as part of larger civil rights groups to form a unity. At 1993's Annual Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) meeting, conventional Black politicians publicly expressed to establish a dialogue with Minister Farrakhan. The CBC chairman Kweisi Mfume announced,

We want the word to go forward today to friend and foe alike that the Congressional Black Caucus, after having entered into a sacred covenant with the NAACP to work for a real and meaningful change, will enter into that same covenant with the Nation of Islam ... (Daniel, 1996).

In the following year, the executive director of the NAACP at the time, Benjamin Chavis, who later converted to Farrakhan's NOI in February 1997, defended Minister Farrakhan against the media and the ADL attacks.

The NAACP is prepared to believe Minister Farrakhan's statement that he is neither anti-Semitic, nor racist and we look forward to concrete deeds in the future that would affirm his statements (Curry, 1994b;36).

In 1994, Chavis organised the first the National African-American Leadership Summit at the headquarters of the NAACP. Despite the objections of the major Jewish civil rights organisations, Farrakhan was invited to the Summit in order to 'reach out to a broad range of leadership among Blacks' (Curry, 1994b;36).

There is no doubt that the biggest social and political event in recent years and maybe in the history of AAs was the MMM organised by Minister Farrakhan. At the end of 1994, Minister Farrakhan called for a march, mostly Black men and dissatisfied other ethnic communities of American society. He relates his call the vision that he experienced in Mexico and explains the main incentives of the march.

As I grew understand more of this vision. This experience I understood it would be a government plan against the NOI and its leader, and black youth in America. And as I watched

Television and saw the way the media was portraying Black youth and feeding guns into the Black community along with drugs and fermenting and stimulating gang violence and gang conflict which would cause decent people to call for God and march to restore order. Because the police was saying they could not handle the gang warfare. And so I saw this as a precipitant to all out war on Black youth in the Black community. So I started touring and saying 'Stop Killing', meeting with gang leaders, talking to them and then it crystallized for me that I should begin speaking directly to Blackmen ... And while I was speaking to blackmen, my first engagement with them, I said 'I am asking for One Million Man to march on Washington and shut the government down ... (Interview, Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

However, Minister Farrakhan broadened his call to include other dissatisfied segment of American society. In December 14, 1994 issue of *the Final Call*, he stated that

now the God of Justice has declared that it is time for us as Black men and Christians, Muslims, Nationalists, Agnostics, young and old members of every fraternal, civic and political organisation to stand together as one to declare our right to justice and our right to determine the future of ourselves and our people' (Farrakhan, 1994:15).

To attract more participants for the march, Farrakhan focussed on reconciliation issues, conservative values and socio-economic and political empowerment. He called the march as 'A Day of Atonement and Reconciliation' (Farrakhan, 1995).

Can we then begin to reconcile ourselves with the Creator ... successfully reconcile our differences and accelerate the upward mobility of the Black community ... The potential presence of Blacks in Washington will be a day set aside to reconcile our spiritual inner beings and to direct our focus to developing our communities, strengthening our families, working to uphold and protect our civil and human rights, and empowering ourselves ... more effective use of our dollars, and through the power of the vote ... (Farrakhan, 1995).

With the endorsement of more than two hundred black national and professional organisations, the MMM brought together wide spectrum of hundreds of thousands of Blacks and significant number of other dissatisfied ethnic minorities in Washington, D.C. on October 16, 1995. The march was marked by a collective spirit and solidarity by the participation of many prominent African American professionals and leaders such as civil right veteran Rosa Parks, poet Maya Angelo, civil right leader Jesse Jackson, B. Chavis, Washington D.C. Mayor Marion Barry, Stevie Wonder, etc. ⁽¹²⁾ (Tinaz, 1996).

In his long speech, Farrakhan expressed the main objectives of the march that seemed to aim to form a political platform to influence political structure of US.

We are gathered here to collect ourselves for a responsibility that God is placing on our shoulders to move this Nation [US] towards a more perfect union ... Black man, you don't have to bash White people. All we got to do is go back home and turn our communities into productive places' (Farrakhan, The Million Man March, Audio-tape, 1995)

Moreover, the following march, Farrakhan exposed a more statesman like character while he was assessing the results of the historical event. He said 'from now on, I would try to be more statesmen like in his language and behavior because the march elevated his stature and his responsibility' (Terry, 1995). Consequently, the march changed his image and perception among AAs and Farrakhan became the most important African American leader among conventional Black leaders (Curry, 1996). The other consequences of the march were that it politically mobilised AAs and increased their political participation in mainstream American politics because the organisers of march urged dissatisfied eligible voters to register to vote. Consequently, the impact of this political participation has been reflected in 1996 general US election (Interview, Mattias Gardell, 1997).⁽¹³⁾

During my interview with him, Farrakhan spelled out his political objectives and plans not outside the US but inside mainstream American politics.

In America there is a tremendous dissatisfaction with politics ... that says to political scientists that there is dissatisfaction in America along across all racial lines or color lines with government. It is our hope to register eight million African Americans, Black people who are eligible but not registered. I'm intending this year [1996] to speak to the immigrant Muslim communities who have social status, economic status but not political influence. And these social and economic statuses must be leveraged into economic influence I mean political influence. Otherwise, our six million Muslims can never be an effective force for change in the political process that's called democracy. I also intend to speak to the Hispanic communities ... Asian communities ... even to the White community. Why? Because some of them dissatisfied as Democrats, others dissatisfied as Republicans and others are dissatisfied as Independents. So what I feel the time has dictated that we create a Third Political Force. Not a Third Political party, but a Third Political Force, meaning that if the alienated blacks become the bedrock of this Third Force ... but Hispanics ... Arabs ... Pakistanis and Muslims become a part of that Third Force. Neither Democrats nor Republican but now developing an agenda that's in the interest of all of us going pass our color but in the interests of all of us so-called citizens of America ... we can force our agenda into the Republican platform and into the Democratic platform and we can choose who would be next president. We would become a powerful political force for change not through violence but through the leveraging of our dissatisfaction ... ⁽¹⁴⁾ (Interview, Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

This kind of political objectives and agendas for participation in politics shows that Minister Farrakhan has been differing from the classical political stance of the NOI which was political absentism, quietism and separatism not to get engaged with the 'devil's politics', White American political system (see Chapter, III; Karenga, 1982). The above statements also indicate that Minister Farrakhan and his NOI in the process to move from peripheral to the centre of the American social, political and economic life (Novak, 1997b; Hentoff, 1998).

In conclusion, both communities have been moving to the mainstream American society. This indicates that as a social or religious movement develops in social, political and economic settings its relation with the surrounding society also change. This process sometimes took radical and extreme way and lead to institutionalisation of the movement. But sometime changes are less dramatic and affect only certain ideological and structural patterns of the movement (Turner and Killian, 1972; Zald, 1970; Rochford, 1982). It is also possible to interpret these two communities' move towards the mainstream society in Zald and Ash's arguments. They maintain that 'as a MO [movement organization] attains an economic and social base in society ... a bureaucratic structure emerges and general accommodation to the society occurs...' (Zald and Ash, 1966:327). In that perspective, Lincoln's predictions and speculation for the prospectus of AAMs are very accurate. He argues that the socio-economic success and prosperity of AAMs lead to tune down their separatist and nationalistic emphasises in order not to risk their socio-economic advancements. They see the security and steady growth and continuity of their wealth would be guaranteed within the established system of the US (Lincoln, 1973).

Chapter Seven: Notes

1) This case is also reported in similar version by the Imams whom I interviewed with such as R. Mubashir, S. Salahuddin; M. B. Deen and ordinary Muslims at the Masjids affiliated with loosely structured the Muslim American Society.

2) For a detailed full review of the catalogue of changes and reforms in the belief system, policies, and infrastructure of the NOI by Imam W. D. Muhammed since he succeeded the leadership in 1975, see Lincoln, 1983; Mamiya, 1982, 1983; Lee, 1988; Gardell, 1996; Tinaz, 1996).

3) The choice of the name for the community and newspaper is meaningful. The name of Bilal is important in the quest for the AAMs to find a source of identity and historical link and racial roots in the history of Islam. Bilal Ibn Rabah, an Ethiopian who had been brought to Arabia as a slave, and he was the first Muezzin, caller for Prayer in the Prophet Muhammad's time (Mamiya:1982).

4) Apart from these two popularly known nation-wide AAM communities which all they owe to their origins to Elijah Muhammad's NOI, there are several marginal splinter NOI communities that are active at local and regional levels. Prior to Minister Farrakhan's leaving the Imam's community, Silis Muhammad, former business manager of *Muhammad Speaks*, announced a declaration on 21 August 1977 that he was leaving. He is the first publicly rebelled against the Imam's reforms and formed a group retaining the very original name of the NOI called the Lost Found Nation of Islam (LFNOI). Silis claims to be the spiritual son of Elijah Muhammad he has no blood connection though. He rejected the changes, new teachings and policies introduced by the Imam W. D. Mohammed. His community is based in Atlanta, GA, and had a couple thousands followers. There are over 20 Temples under his leadership mostly in the south and west costs and some east cost regions of the USA. The groups publishes a newspaper called *Muhammad Speaks*, the title was used during the Elijah Muhammad's era. (see the history and objectives of this splinter group, S. Muhammad, 1985).

John Muhammad, elder brother of Elijah Muhammad, rejected the new teachings and programmes of the Imam W. D. Mohammed and formed the NOI in very orthodox way that is accord with the Elijah's. He has handful followers and a Temple in Detroit. The organisation publishes *Minister John Muhammad Speaks* (Jones, 1988).

Emmanuel Muhammad's group is based in Baltimore and he claims to be true successor of Elijah Muhammad. He has a couple of hundred followers and prints a paper called, *Muhammad Speaks* (Podet, 1994).

Finally, the last National Secretary of Elijah Muhammad Abass Rassoull formed a movement aiming to unite all splinter NOI groups under one organisation. That's why he calls the name of his movement as the United Nation of Islam. He calls himself Solomon, Allah in person. His group is active in two states, Kansas and Maryland and makes headline and news coverage locally. The movement shows relative success in communal and self-help economic policies. It publishes a periodical called *IT'S TIME TO KNOW!!!* (Breux, 1999; Coe, 1997; McLaughlin, 1999).

5) Professor A. B McCloud expressed her mixed reactions towards these two communities during my field research when I visited her on several occasions. Dr Farid Muhammad, Dr Abdul Salaam, Dr Alaudin Shabazz also have raised their mixed reactions. In addition to these, Alim (1998) and Muwakkil (1998) also raised their mixed reactions toward these two AAM leaders.

6) For the controversial relations and developments between Farrakhan, Jews and Jesse Jackson see Gardell, 1996:245-84; Magida, 1996: 139-73; Curry, 1994a:28-41).

7) For the Elijah Muhammad's political and economic philosophy and theories, see Walton and McIver, 1974; L. E. Wright, 1987, 1994; Parenti, 1964; Tyler, 1966).

8) The changes of Elijah Muhammad's rhetoric and attitude towards the whites and establishment, see his last sermon delivered at Saviour's Day 1974 (see Chapter I).

9) It should be noted here that the imam's policies are practical and pragmatic. He seems to not to jeopardise his cordial relations with the heads of Muslim countries and bureaucrats. Because since he succeeded to the leadership, Imam received a quite significant financial supports from the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia to implement his reforms to bring the NOI to mainstream Islam. For further information see Tinaz, 1993; Lincoln, 1983; Gans and Lowe, 1980.

10) During the field research, I observed how the Muslims associated with Imam W. D. Mohammed's Masjids are mobilised locally and nationally. For example, in Chicago, I went to make observations in Gha-is Askia's campaign for Illinois State Senate. He is affiliated with the Imam's community. Muslims from all ethnic backgrounds, immigrant and indigenous, supported his bid for the Senate (Rufai, 1995). It is also possible to see the AAMs working and seeking greater role in politics, both local and federal levels (see Neal 1991; Abdel-Shakur, 1996; Sharif, 1999).

11) For the full story of Farrakhan's vision see Gardell's study, 1996, pp. 131-135. Gardell also gives a detailed information about the Minister's divine mission in rebuilding the NOI upon his experience in Mexico.

12) However, a significant number of Black professional and politicians who are important players in the civil rights community such as Congressmen J. Lewis (D-Ga), and C. Rangel (D-N.Y.), Professor Roger Wilkins, Civil right chair Mary F. Berry (Curry, 1996) did not participate in the march. On the contrary, they expressed their criticisms against the organisers of the march but not the agenda of it.

13) Mattias Gardell, personal communications, 7 March 1997.

14) Minister Farrakhan reiterated his similar political objectives and plans to the late John F. Kennedy Jr. who interviewed with him for his magazine, *George* (Kennedy, 1996).

CHAPTER VIII

Polarisation of the Appeal of Islam Among African American Muslims: The Followers of Imam W. D. Mohammed and Minister L. Farrakhan (1978 onwards)

There is a general understanding that social movements and their organisational patterns undergo change and transformation over time (Michels, 1962; Weber, 1968; Zald and Ash, 1966). As discussed in Chapter III, one of the factors that caused the schism was a movement away from the original teachings and objectives of the NOI; this is a sign of 'institutionalisation' (Parenti, 1964). No social or religious movement comes into existence with a fully articulated ideology, a complete set of objectives and policies and a well founded organisational structure (Rochford, 1985). Both the organisational patterns and ideology of social and religious movements seem to have a protean character because of their membership composition, which is generally young, and are subjected to a process of change. They respond to the socio-political environment and circumstances surrounding them in society.

The events affecting the NOI in the 1970s had a major impact on the movement's development and the direction of its policies. By the mid-1970s, the ruling stratum of the NOI indicated signs of accommodation by giving less emphasis to its unconventional teachings such as separatism and blaming White people as demons (see Chapter I; Lee, 1988). In 1975, Elijah Muhammad, the organisational founder and leader of the NOI for over forty years, died. Since 1975, under the leadership of Imam W. D. Mohammed (formerly Wallace D. Muhammad), the movement has undergone radical and fundamental changes in all aspects of the movement (its teachings, objectives, policies and organisational structure) in a process of bringing the NOI into both mainstream Islam and the values of mainstream American society (Mamiya, 1982; Marsh, 1984; Tinaz, 1996). However, the rapid transformation of the movement has created several splits each leader claiming to be entitled to ascend to the throne of Elijah Muhammad and aiming to revitalise his original teachings and programmes. This important schism and its consequences have already been examined and analysed briefly in Chapter VII. Eventually a polarisation occurred, some following the Imam's

conventional version of Islam, while others who wanted to revive the old teachings of Elijah Muhammad split off, the most prominent being Minister Farrakhan's NOI.

In this chapter, I will examine the two main contending AAM communities, Muslim American Society (MAS) led by Imam W. D. Mohammed and the Nation of Islam (NOI) led by Minister L. Farrakhan. The polarisation of Islamic appeal is reflected in their followers' recruitment patterns and conversion experiences to a specific form of Islam. In the first part of this chapter I will analyse the predisposing factors of the followers who were recruited to these two different forms of Islam and I will discuss, in turn, their socio-spatial conditions, their affiliations with African American social, cultural and political associations, the tensions they felt and their 'religious seeking' efforts. In the latter part of the chapter, I will examine the situation of the followers of these two religious groups: their recruitment strategies, grounds and networks; my informants' motives and reasons for converting to these two different versions of Islam; and finally, the reactions of their parents, families and friends to their conversions and recruitments.

Before moving on to the above issues, it would be useful to compare the socio-demographic variables of my informants in both Imam W. D. Mohammed's and Minister L. Farrakhan's communities.

8.1. Demographic Variables

The demographic variables of the followers of these two religious groups differ from those of the NOI members who were recruited to the movement during Elijah Muhammad's era. It may be possible to see in these demographic changes the impact of socio-economic policies since the mid-1970s aimed at improving the conditions of AAs. However, their success and implementation are disputable (Marable, 1991). Some of the variables of my informants in these two groups display similar characteristics to other findings on new religious movements (Galanter, 1980; Barker, 1984; Beckford, 1985). Demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status, social class, education and

religion are important social categories that help to account for people's decisions to join social and religious movements.

8.1.1. Age Distribution

Unlike the age distribution of NOI members who joined in Elijah Muhammad's era, my informants in these two groups are considerably younger. However, when each group is taken into account separately the age ratio varies. While Farrakhan's NOI presents a noticeably youthful character, the Imam's MAS shows some middle age features. This difference was noticed during my participant observation and field research, mostly in the Chicago area and Detroit in 1995 and 1996 (see Chapter II). It should be noted here that large numbers of Imam W. D. Mohammed's followers are former NOI members who joined the movement during Elijah Muhammad's leadership. They have supported and followed the Imam's Islamisation reforms of the NOI since 1975. Nevertheless, my respondents from the Imam's MAS here are those who converted to Islam under his leadership. The total number of my informants for these two groups is 77 (41 followers of Imam W. D. Mohammed, and 36 followers of Minister L. Farrakhan). As the data reported in Table 8.1 indicate, the majority of respondents in both groups had converted to Islam before turning 30 years old, 60 out of 77 (74%). But the age of recruitment

Table 8.1. Age at joining (1978-2000)

	Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS			Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
a) Teenagers	3	2	5	4	3	7
b) 20-25 years	6	3	9	7	10	17
c) 26-30 years	8	5	13	4	4	8
d) 31-35 years	5	4	9	1	2	3
e) 36-40 years	1	3	4	1	0	1
f) 41-45 years	0	1	1	0	0	0
Total	23	18	41	17	19	36

differs slightly in the two groups. The majorities (66%) of Farrakhan's followers were 25 years and under when they joined, 24 out of 36. It appears that this age group was the most attracted by nationalistic ideology and also the most alienated from and dissatisfied with the system and values of the dominant society in the US (Singer, 1988). The age distribution of NOI recruits shows patterns common to recruitment to

NRMs (Beckford, 1985). On the other hand, the age of recruitment for Muslims affiliated with the Imam's MAS is early middle age, 27 out of 41 (65%) being 26 years and over when they converted. My findings on the age of the Imam's followers agree with earlier studies that hold that conversion to Islam is, typically, an early middle age phenomenon (Kose, 1996a, 1996b; Poston, 1992). Moreover, the reason for the polarisation between the followers of Minister Farrakhan and the Muslims affiliated with Imam W. D. Mohammed becomes more apparent when their motives for conversion to two different versions of Islam are examined. This issue will be discussed later in this chapter.

8.1.2. Gender and Marital Status, Race and Ethnic Background

The gender ratio of AAMs is in my sample as it has always been in the NOI, in favour of men. The gender of these two groups is similar, 37 females and 40 males. But this does not reflect the true gender composition, which in both communities is still two to one in favour of males. The data on Minister Farrakhan's followers has been partly collected through Muslim professionals' assistance and co-operation (see Chapter II). Both gender ratio and age distribution are markedly different from those to be found in the more established Black Churches where women outnumber men and the age group is middle aged and older (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990). In particular, as far as Farrakhan's NOI is concerned, the movement's recruitment tactics since the mid-1980s have been directed at stopping crime and violence by rescuing troubled young Black men and restoring their concept of manhood. Consequently, the NOI has attracted a significant number of young Black men to its fold (Interview, Dr Aladdin Shabbaz, 1995a).

The marital status of the respondents is shown in Table 8.2. Of the 77 in the two communities the majority (61%) are married. I conducted the field research mostly in the Chicago area where there is also a significant number of single people, 20 out of 77 (25%), in both communities. Marital status is an important factor in recruitment because several respondents in my sample were converted to Islam through their spouses. This

can be seen mostly in those conversion experiences to a conventional form of Islam, as with some of my informants in the Imam's community, and in other conversion studies

Table 8.2. Marital status of recruits at the time of joining (1978-2000)

	Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS			Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
a) Single	5	3	8	7	5	12
b) Married	16	12	28	8	11	19
c) Widow/Widower	0	0	0	0	0	0
d) Divorced	1	3	4	1	2	3
e) Separated	1	0	1	1	1	2
Total	23	18	41	17	19	36

of Islam (Anway, 1996, 1998; Kose, 1996). This factor will be explored later in the section 'Recruitment Strategies'. All my informants in both communities are African-Americans with the exception of one male respondent in Farrakhan's group who comes from the Caribbean. During my field research I noticed that there were several White and immigrant Muslims worshipping at and participating in the activities of Masjids affiliated with Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS. Although the Imam's organisation has very cordial relations with immigrant and White Muslim organisations, some rank-and-file Muslims of the Imam's community have experienced some unpleasant and discriminatory treatments they received from immigrant Muslims (Imam R. Mubashir, 1995; Imam D. Karim, 1996).

On the other hand, in over 11 months of observation, I saw very few White people in Minister Farrakhan's NOI when I participated in the group's Sunday services and in speaking engagements and social and cultural activities. It was interesting to see a significant number of Hispanics, a few whites and also a couple of Japanese males around the NOI. Through Sister Tynetta Muhammad's racial and ethnic connection, the NOI began giving a specific emphasis on Hispanics living in the USA to recruit them to the movement. She was one of the Honourable Elijah Muhammad's wives and is currently holds a prestigious position as a theologian and a respected Queen Mother in the movement. In 1998, the NOI first time in its history established a Mosque in New York for Spanish speaking people. Accordingly, the NOI officials like Ministers Ismael Muhammad and Rasul Hakim Muhammad, both are sons of Elijah Muhammad by Tynetta Muhammad, translate and provide materials in Spanish (Interview, M. Rufai, 2000). Moreover, a White Muslim researcher in Chicago, whose ancestors came from

Albania, disclosed to me that he and his Japanese flatmate joined the NOI together. However, he has not heard from the NOI Mosque Maryam officials since he submitted his Pledge Card (see Appendix II) requesting membership. Once I asked him why he wanted to join the NOI and he said that he wanted to give discipline to his life and to feel a sense of collective spirit (Interview, Muhammad Al-Ahari, 1995).

Relations between Farrakhan's NOI and mainstream Muslims and organisations have been very distant and rocky (Interview, M. Rufai, 1996). There are only two immigrants Muslims in the Chicago area, Misbahu Rufai and Ahmed Tijani, from Nigeria and Ghana respectively, who have sincere relations with and are actively involved in the movement's activities and services. Apart from these two immigrants Muslims, there is another Muslim professional and journalist, Ali Bagdadi, who has had close relations with the NOI since the late 1960s (Interview, A. Bagdadi, 1999). During the Elijah Muhammad era, he was a columnist on the NOI's newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*, reporting news about Islam and the Muslim world (Tinaz, 1993). Since the early 1980s, he has been a regular columnist on the *Final Call*, the official newspaper of Farrakhan's NOI (Interview, Ali Bagdadi, 1995, 1999).

The distant and strained relations between Minister Farrakhan's NOI and mainstream Muslims and organisations derive from religious differences and understandings. One high profile Minister of the NOI, Minister Rasul Hakim who is one of Elijah Muhammad's sons by Tynetta Muhammad, who was his secretary, complained to me that,

Our immigrant Muslim brothers and sisters do not understand their [NOI] mission and goals. They are suspicious and keep away because of misconception. They think we're not believing in and practising real Islam. But there are some Muslims who sympathise and associate with the Nation ... (Minister Rasul Hakim Muhammad, 1995, paraphrased).

Another Muslim professional, expressing his resentment about these distant relationships, said that

In the USA relations are very rocky because 'orthodox' Muslims do not regard NOI members as true Muslims. It is mainly due to 'orthodox' Muslim ostracization of NOI members in the USA. Relations, however, abroad have been encouraging and cordial (Respondent # 149).

However, in recent years and in particular, since the Million Man March (MMM)¹ in 1995, relations between Farrakhan's NOI and other Muslim organisations have indicated gradual improvements as have the relations between the two contending AAM communities of Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS and Minister Farrakhan's NOI. Both the leaders of immigrant organisations such as ISNA, ICNA etc and a significant number of immigrant Muslims, and Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS members accepted the invitation of Minister Farrakhan to join and participate in Saviour's Day 2000 celebration to form a broad base unity and co-operation for the cause Islam in the USA (Interviews, Misbahu. Rufai, 2000; Dr Farid Muhammad, 2000).

8.1.3. Educational Level of Muslims

Compared with the educational level of NOI members in Elijah Muhammad's era (see Chapter V), the current educational achievements of Muslims in this study of the two communities show a remarkable improvement. As can be seen in Table 7.3, a majority had completed some college courses or had college and university degrees and less than a quarter had only a high school grade. It is interesting that none of my informants reported that they only had an elementary school grade whereas 16% of NOI members in Elijah Muhammad's era only had an elementary school grade and almost half (47%)

Table 8.3. Educational levels of Muslims (1978-2000)

	Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS			Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
a) Elementary School	0	0	0	0	0	0
b) High School	5	3	8	4	5	9
c) Some College	7	6	13	6	5	11
d) College/University	9	6	15	5	7	12
e) Graduate	2	3	5	2	2	4
Total	23	18	41	17	19	36

had no more than a high school grade. In contrast, from the late 1970s onwards, the AAs who joined both communities had a considerable educational background. The two communities have similar educational levels, 22% had a high school grade at the time they joined (19% of the Imam's and 25% of the Minister's followers). These high school graduates joined the Imam's group at a slightly earlier period than the Minister's - from the mid-1970s to the mid - 1980s and from the late 1970s to the late 1980s

respectively. Again each in community more than a third of my informants reported that they had undertaken some college courses or college/university degrees. A significant number of the respondents, 6 out of 41 in the Imam's group and 9 out of 36 in the Minister's NOI, decided to join the group and convert to Islam while they were still attending college. This is not surprising because colleges played a direct role in the recruitment process. From the late 1980s onwards, as part of their recruitment strategy both communities began to target educational settings for missionary activities organising speaking engagements, debates and guest speakers. At college and university campuses, Muslim Student Associations (MSA) invited Imam W. D. Mohammed and Imams affiliated with his community to give talks. The NOI has its own student associations at colleges and universities, mainly traditional Black colleges and universities, where a overwhelming of students are Blacks, and Black social and cultural associations organise activities including inviting Minister Farrakhan and his Ministers to speak. In the recruitment section of this chapter, the role of schools in the recruitment process will be discussed further.

8.1.4. Religious and Denominational Background

There is a high degree of uniformity in the religious background of my informants in these two communities and my respondents from Elijah Muhammad's era. Historically, AAs' religious affiliations have predominantly been Christian, various denominations of Protestant Christianity, among them Baptist and Methodist, being overrepresented (Sahib, 1951; Lincoln, 1973; Smith, 1984, Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990). As indicated in

Table 8.4. Religious and denominational affiliation of recruits (1978-2000)

	Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS			Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
a) Baptist	11	7	18	7	9	16
b) Methodist	6	4	10	4	5	9
c) Pentecostal	0	1	1	1	1	2
d) Catholic	2	2	4	2	0	2
e) Others and Non-Denominational (Lutheran, Presbyterian)	0	2	2	1	2	3
f) Islam (Islam, NOI, born in the community)	3	2	5	1	1	2
g) Not applicable	1	0	1	1	1	2
Total	23	18	41	17	19	36

Table 8.4, a large number of my sample in both communities, 34 out of 77 (44%), were Baptist at the time they converted to Islam. A substantial number, 19 out of 77 (24%), came from a Methodist background. Seven respondents indicated that they were born in the community, 5 in the Imam's and 2 in the Minister's. The rest of my informants reported having been affiliated with different Christian denominations: Catholic (6), Pentecostal (3), others and non-denominational (5). Three respondents commented that the survey question was not applicable to them without giving any reason.

In a separate survey questionnaire, I asked the respondents how they would describe themselves prior to their conversion. They were given different options: religious, conservative, secular, progressive or other. Sometimes they marked a single option and sometimes more than one. Contrary to an implicit assumption among researchers on NRMs that young people prior to joining religious groups came from a non-religious background and worldview (Lofland and Stark, 1965; Richardson and Steward, 1977), over half of my respondents indicated that they were religious in one form or another. This figure includes the combined numbers of the groups answering, religious, religious conservative or religious progressive. Table 8.5 shows the degree of religiosity, which

Table 8.5. Members' religious tendencies before recruitment (1978-2000)

	Imam W .D. Mohammed's MAS			Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
a) Religious/Conservatives	3	5	8	2	4	6
b) Secular/Progressive	8	3	11	7	5	12
c) Religious	2	4	6	2	4	6
d) Religious/Progressive	5	4	9	2	3	5
e) Not interested in religion/ Not Applicable	5	2	7	4	3	7
Total	23	18	41	17	19	36

varies between the two groups, relatively higher among the Imam's followers than the Minister's. It is interesting to find a similar proportion of secular oriented recruits in both communities, 27% and 33% respectively. The number of recruits who had no interest in religion prior to joining was the same for both communities, 7 and 7. Their disillusionment and dissatisfaction with religion will be analysed later in 'Dissatisfaction and Seekership' which concerns the predisposing conditions to conversion.

8.1.5. Social and Occupational Status

Social and occupational status are essential demographic variables in determining what kind of people a social movement appeals to. Unlike adherents of many other NRMs (Barker, 1981; Rochford, 1985), AAMs currently come primarily from the lower-middle class (Interviews, Bilal Earl, 1999; Aisha Mustapha, 1999). The difference between AAMs from Elijah Muhammad's era and now is that the former were predominantly from the lower Black working classes whereas the latter in the Imam's and the Minister's groups seem to come largely from the lower-middle classes. I asked in the survey questionnaire what their occupations were prior to joining and what their current jobs are. As the findings in Tables 8.6 and 8.7 indicate, the respondents in both communities tend to describe themselves as wishing to move up the social ladder. In that upward wish for social mobility it is possible to see a continuity of Elijah Muhammad's strong tradition of self-help economic teachings and programmes (Sharif, 1985; W. D. Mohammed, 1995; Farrakhan, 1989). Both Imam W. Mohammed's economic programmes like 'the Collective Buying Programme' and 'the American

Table 8.6. Occupational status of Muslims at the time their conversion (1978-2000)

	Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS			Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
a) Senior Professional and Managerial	0	0	0	0	0	0
b) Professional and Executive	3	2	5	1	2	3
c) Secretarial/ Technical Supervisory/ Skilled	7	4	11	4	5	9
d) Semi-skilled	2	3	5	1	2	3
e) Unskilled	2	3	5	2	2	4
f) Student	4	2	6	5	4	9
g) Military	2	0	2	0	0	0
h) Homemaker	0	1	1	0	2	2
i) Unemployed	1	0	1	3	2	5
k) Self-employed	1	0	1	1	0	1
l) Not applicable	1	3	4	0	0	0
Total	23	18	41	17	19	36

Muslim Mission Committee to Purchase 1000.000 Commodities (A.M.M.C.O.P)' (Sharif, 1985:112-115), and Minister L. Farrakhan's P.O.W.E.R (People Organized and Working for Economic Rebirth) and 'self-improvement' programmes appear to be

directly inspired by Elijah Muhammad's economic teachings and programmes (E. Muhammad, 1965:169-203).

Table 8.6 shows Muslims' occupational status in the two groups in my sample. Almost 26% of all respondents had technical, secretarial, and skilled jobs, for example, clerks, technicians, mechanics, sales representatives, photographers, bank tellers, secretaries etc. The same number of respondents were students prior to their conversion. There were fewer recruits in professional, semi-skilled or unskilled jobs: 10%, 10% and 12%, respectively. Those in unskilled jobs and those who were unemployed (8%) joined the communities in their early years, in the Imam's MAS from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, and in the Minister's NOI from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. It is interesting that none of the respondents in the two groups reported that they had senior professional and managerial occupations at the time they joined. Mamiya (1982) speculated on the social class composition of Muslims and its mobility in the early 1980s when the two groups, predominantly Minister Farrakhan's faction, were still in their initial organisational development. He observed that while the Imam's community seemed 'open for recruiting the Black middle-class more actively', Farrakhan's resurrected NOI returned to the NOI's earlier recruitment strategy from 'the fertile ground of the Black masses or the Black underclass' (1982:148-49). However, Mamiya was not determinist or one-sided. He added that 'obviously, there are middle-class sympathizers of Farrakhan's Nation, and Wallace's Mission does have programmes for the Black lower-class' (1982:149).

Table 8.7. Current occupational status of Muslims (1978-2000)

	Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS			Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
a) Senior Professional and Managerial	0	0	0	0	0	0
b) Professional and Executive	5	4	9	4	4	8
c) Secretarial/ Technical Supervisory/ Skilled	8	6	14	6	7	13
d) Semi-skilled	1	3	4	2	3	5
e) Unskilled	2	1	3	2	2	4
f) Student	1	0	1	1	0	1
g) Military	1	0	1	0	0	0
h) Homemaker	0	2	2	0	2	2
i) Unemployed	0	0	0	0	0	0
k) Self-employed	4	2	6	2	1	3
Total	23	18	41	17	19	36

The occupational diversity of my informants in both communities reveals that the teachings and programmes of these two religious groups appeal to a wide spectrum of AAs. Table 8.7 shows my sample's current occupational patterns which point to their upward social mobility since they joined these two communities. In Chapter V I showed how Elijah Muhammad's economic teachings and programmes contributed to change the socio-economic conditions of African American Muslims. It is possible to apply a similar theoretical framework to interpret the socio-economic changes of my informants in the Imam's MAS and the Minister's NOI since the inspirations for their economic and 'self-help' teachings come from the same source, the Elijah Muhammad's economic and self-help policies and practices. There is no need, therefore, to reiterate here the same arguments. Rather it is better to analyse the predisposing conditions for my informants' recruitment to these two communities.

8.2. Socio-spatial and Contextual Conditions of Recruitment

For racially and ethnically exclusive social or religious movements, the socio-spatial and contextual conditions of their prospective recruits are vital for their rise and growth. Several sociologists have indicated the importance of social and contextual conditions for NRMs (Strauss, 1976; Balch and Taylor, 1977; Stark and Bainbridge, 1980). As discussed at length in Chapter V, the social and demographic conditions of Black neighbourhoods have played an important role in the rise of religio-nationalist movements and were their main recruitment ground from the 1930s to the 1960s. Although circumstances have improved relatively in Black neighbourhoods, both in the Imam's and Minister's groups, the racial and ethnic composition of the neighbourhoods of my informants has remained predominantly Black, as it was in Elijah Muhammad's time. As reported in Table 8.8, a large number of my respondents indicated that they are living in predominantly Black neighbourhoods, in all 71%. However, when each group is looked at separately there are some differences. While 80% of the Minister's followers predominantly live in Black neighbourhoods, Muslims in the Imam's community seem to be more integrated, only 63%, living in Black neighbourhoods. Over 24% of my informants in the Imam's community reported that they live in racially

mixed neighbourhoods whereas half that proportion of the informants in the Minister's group (13%) live in mixed neighbourhoods. The other interesting finding is that the

Table 8.8. Racial Composition of Neighbourhood (1978-2000)

	Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS			Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
a) Predominantly Black Neighbourhood	15	11	26	15	14	29
b) Mixed Racial/ Ethnic Neighbourhood	5	5	10	2	3	5
c) Predominantly White Neighbourhood	3	2	5	0	2	2
Total	23	18	41	17	19	36

number of those who are living in White neighbourhoods has risen to 9% in comparison with 0.9% in Elijah Muhammad's era. Consider the following remarks made by Muslims in both communities about the racial composition of the neighbourhoods where they live.

A 47 year old male Muslim communication consultant describes his neighbourhood in Chicago.

My neighborhood? One hundred, one hundred percent African-American ... Chicago is known as the best segregated city in the US. And that's the way Chicago was made you know. Even in the 90s the nature of Chicago has not changed. In fact, there is a neighbourhood that has Europeans who live there in the majority. If one African American moves there, then they sell the homes and move out. This is a phenomenon of White flight, and continues to occur so that Chicago is becoming all African Americans. Even many suburbs are like that (Interview, G. Bilal, 1999, verbatim).

A female Muslim professional, who works as a teacher and is in charge of the Educational Research and Evaluation Department of the NOI, gives the residential composition of Muslims in the movement.

Most of our believers in the Nation live in African-American neighbourhoods. There is a considerable number of brothers and sisters who stay in mixed neighbourhoods, but very, very few Muslims live in White neighbourhoods (Interview, Sister Shelby Muhammad, 1995, paraphrased).

The role of neighbourhood is important in recruitment. There is no doubt, of course, that the contextual and social circumstances of neighbourhoods directly influence the recruitment grounds and networks where prospective converts encounter religious movements without pre-existing relations. They will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

8.2.1. Religious, Socio-economic and Racial Tensions

Although these predisposing factors are not always necessary for recruitment to NRMs (Seggar and Kunz, 1972; Balch and Taylor, 1977; Heirich, 1977) they contribute to the situations of prospective recruits prior to their joining religious movements (Lofland and Stark, 1965). It has to be noted that my informants in the Imam's and the Minister's groups do not seem to have experienced the same degree of harsh socio-economic deprivation, racial discrimination and religious dissatisfaction as their senior brethren, my respondents from Elijah Muhammad's era (see Chapter V). The old members of the NOI generally reported the same problems that AAs confronted at that time. However, since the late-1970s, those who joined either group in my study expressed different tensions and problems.

Table 8.9 shows the variety of tensions that my respondents reported. The informants in each group expressed diverse problems prior to joining. While a large number of Muslims' dissatisfactions centred on religious issues in the Imam's community, Farrakhan's followers focused more on socio-economic and racial ones. Of those informants who pointed to experiencing more than one, the Imam's followers picked religious and socio-economic problems, while Farrakhan's referred mostly to socio-economic and racial problems, only then followed by religious ones. In addition to

Table 8.9. Were you experiencing any tensions before becoming Muslim? (1978-2000)

	Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS			Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
a) Psychological	2	2	4	1	1	2
b) Religious	6	7	13	2	4	6
c) Socio-economic	4	2	6	5	4	9
d) Racial	3	1	4	4	3	7
e) More than one above tensions	5	3	8	4	3	7
f) Other	1	1	2	0	2	2
g) None/ Not Applicable	2	2	4	1	2	3
Total	23	18	41	17	19	36

these, it is interesting to notice that more females than male Muslims in my sample expressed religious concerns. In conclusion, there is a direct linkage between my informants' reported tensions and the emphasis and priorities of groups and their leaders' teachings. While the Imam's teachings and emphasises are on religious issues,

Islamic history, Islamic beliefs and practices, morality, etc. (Mohammed, 1982, 1986, 1991; Mustapha, 1988), Minister Farrakhan's teachings and speeches concentrate on social, economic, political and moral problems of the AAs (Farrakhan, 1989, 1991). These variations and the polarisation of my informants' responses become more obvious when they point out their motives and reasons for conversion to Islam. These motives will be analysed at length in the second part of this chapter.

8.2.2. Social, Cultural and Political Affiliation

Unlike my informants from Elijah Muhammad's era, who had strong support for and affiliations with largely unconventional Black nationalist, political and religious organisations, the majority of the followers of both the Imam and the Minister in this study associated with and sometimes supported more conventional Black social, cultural and political associations before joining these groups. From the late 1960s to the early 1970s, unconventional Black nationalist movements were suppressed by the government and gradually lost their appeal to the Black masses (Marable, 1991) due to 'internal conflicts and power struggles' (Rochford, 1989). Some were institutionalised, transformed and estranged from their original ideologies and objectives (Messinger, 1958; Zald, 1970). Whatever the reasons for the Black Nationalist movements' disappearance and loss of appeal, my respondents from both the Imam's and the Minister's groups seem not to have been affiliated with 1960s and 1970s Black Power groups. Instead, in the 1980s and 1990s, the respondents reported a new phenomenon of involvement in Black Nationalist groups such as the NOI or Black gangs. Table 8.10 shows that 5 respondents in the Imam's community indicated that they were involved in the NOI prior to their conversion to Islam,⁽²⁾ and one male informant was affiliated to the Black gang called Black Stone. However, in the Minister's NOI a total of 11 respondents, 7 male and 4 female, reported that they were involved in Black Nationalist groups or gangs before joining the NOI. This causal link was a predisposing factor between the prospective convert's previous ideological and social inclination and the teachings of a particular movement (Lofland and Stark, 1965; Gordon, 1974; Greil, 1977; Richardson and Stewart, 1977). It is likely that because of my informants' involvement in nationalist groups and gangs they found congruencies between their

Table 8.10. Muslims' involvement in Black social, cultural and political organisations before converting to Islam (1978-2000)

	Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS			Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
a) Black social/cultural associations (Zeta Phi Beta, Alpha Phi Alpha, Sorority, Fraternity, Black Scouts and etc.)	9	7	16	6	8	14
b) Civil Rights Groups (NAACP, Operation PUSH, Urban League etc.)	6	4	10	2	3	5
c) Black Nationalist and Black Gang Groups (NOI, All African People Revolutionary Party, Black Stone, El- Rukn etc.)	4	2	6	7	4	11
d) None, Not Applicable	4	5	9	2	4	6
Total	23	18	41	17	19	36

existing outlook and the Minister's NOI teachings and objectives prior to joining the movement. As shown in Table 8.10, a large number of the respondents in both communities, 30 out of the 77 (39%) were involved in and affiliated with various Black students' social and cultural associations, such as Zeta Phi Beta, Alpha Phi Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta and so on, while they were attending college. These social and cultural societies' influences, of course, were not the same as those of Black Nationalist groups, but were likely to make young AAs conscious as far as Black issues and problems are concerned. When the young AAs encounter Black religious and political groups that raise similar concerns, this kind of consciousness appears to contribute to their decisions to join.

The other interesting result that emerged from Table 8.10 is that my informants' support for and involvement in conventional civil rights organisations is very low. There is also a variation between my informants in the two communities. The ratio of respondents in the Imam's MAS who supported and were involved in civil rights groups in the past is higher than in the Minister's NOI. This shows that mainstream AA organisations still do not appeal to the Black masses. In addition a significant number of the respondents did not indicate involvement in any organisation.

To find out more about my informants' discontent with mainstream Black organisations I asked in my survey questionnaire, 'What do/did you think of the integrationist policies of civil rights groups?' The answers of the respondents reflect a differentiation according to the position of the groups towards mainstream society and establishments. As indicated in Table 8.11, a significant number of my respondents from both communities (31 out of 77) said that they disagreed with civil rights groups and were

Table 8.11. What did/do you think of the integrationist policies of Civil Rights Groups? (1978-2000)

	Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS			Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
a) Disapprove/ disagree	8	4	12	11	8	19
b) Mixed remarks/ ambivalent	8	7	15	4	5	9
c) Approve	5	4	9	2	3	5
d) No idea/ no comments	2	3	5	0	3	3
Total	23	18	41	17	19	36

critical of their policies. However, the respondents' reactions differ from one group to the other. My informants in the Minister's NOI, for example, expressed more disapproval than those in the Imam's MAS (19 against 12). As far as their approval and mixed remarks about civil rights groups were concerned the Imam's followers in the study expressed a more positive and favourable stance than those in the Minister's NOI. Consider the following remarks of my informants from both communities. A 47 year old male professional who works as a communication consultant made an interesting comment. Even though he had been familiar with the NOI and its members in the early 1970s he did not join the movement because of its religious teachings, but supported its economic and social programmes. After 1975, when the movement moved gradually towards mainstream Islam, he converted because he found that the religious teachings became more rational, logical and coherent.

Well, erm ... I mean for me I liked the idea of separating, you know, that's racist. I just believed that we never would be able to get along together. So I did not like the idea of pushing this integration idea on ... It is surprising but I like the idea of the model of the Nation of Islam, just give us a land we call our own ... (Interview, Gerard Bilal, 1999, verbatim).

But a 27 year old research development officer makes favourable remarks on the civil rights movements.

The civil rights movements produced good changes for the African Americans by overcoming laws of segregation and discrimination based on color and race (Respondent # 110).

A female teacher also makes similar comments.

They made a lot of contributions to pass laws to lift discrimination and segregation. They also provided better employment opportunities for African Americans (Respondent # 129).

A Muslim male in the Imam's MAS who supported civil rights groups like NAACP and Operation Push before conversion had mixed thoughts.

I supported civil rights groups and believed them necessary, but at times they were ineffective (Respondent # 120).

A 47 year old female freelance journalist points out the consequences of the efforts of civil rights groups.

Well, I understood that there would be a problem when it comes to integration. If you assimilate or integrate too much you'll, in fact, be neglecting your own neighbourhood and that to some degree did happen ... Our successful people, more advanced African Americans in their attempts to integrate got pulled away from their own communities from their own people and their own neighbourhood ... We've to make commitment to ourselves, to our own people no matter how successful you get and how progressive you are, you have to come back home. You can't get towed away from your roots (Interview # 3, verbatim).

The above remarks from my respondents in the Imam's community reflect mixed news, disagreement with and also, to some extent, feelings of approval towards the civil rights groups. On the other hand, the remarks of informants in the Minister's NOI demonstrate their strong disapproval. A 40 year old computer consultant, for example, claims that their inadequate policies were not effective.

Unsuccessful for the masses of Black people. Their policies are not the solution to our dilemma (Respondent # 159).

Another male professional who works as a photographer criticises all the history of civil rights groups.

It hasn't worked, we gave it many years, many lives and it did not work (Respondent # 161).

A 28 year old male news writer's comments ridicule the civil rights groups.

They are a joke. They're weak, I don't think they'll ever exist (Respondent # 156).

Female respondents' opinions of the civil rights groups are no different from the males' harsh criticism. A 41 year old female educator says that,

We have had more loss of independence than gain because of their ineffective policies (Respondent # 176).

A 28 year old female who works as an editorial assistant at a newspaper blames the civil rights groups for the conditions of AAs.

They set the Black community backwards (Respondent # 178).

Next, two female educators indicate how their joining the NOI increased their discontent with civil rights groups. One works as a school teacher and the other as a kindergarten teacher.

I rejected them before coming to the Nation. I am even stronger after coming to the Nation (Interview, Shelby Muhammad, 1995a, verbatim).

I rejected these sentiments [integrationist sentiments] before becoming a member of the Nation. After I rejected stronger because I believe in separation of the races (Respondent # 175).

Besides the strong criticism and rejections, a significant number of Muslims in the NOI also made mixed remarks, 9 out of 36, 25%. A male Muslim who works as a managing editor at a newspaper says that,

The Civil Rights movement produced good causes but ignored the depth of White resentment and need for Black internal development (Respondent # 153).

A 35 year old female training specialist comments on the pros and cons of the civil rights movement.

I believe that it has hurt the closeness of the Black family and has hurt us supporting Black people and businesses. On the other hand, it has provided better employment and education opportunities (Respondent # 168).

The above accounts of my informants show that a large segment of rank and file AAs are still critical and dissatisfied with the stance of conventional African American organisations. More importantly, their individual and collective expressions indicate that they are still disenchanted with the values of mainstream society even though their social conditions and historical circumstances have changed and, to some extent, improved (Marable, 1991) in comparison with the 1950s and 1960s. However, my informants' responses and comments varied considerably depending on the group they are affiliated with. It is possible to see in this variation the impact of the groups' positions and the rhetoric of their leaders towards mainstream society and its establishments. Since he took on the leadership from 1975 onwards Imam W. D. Mohammed has brought the community in line with the civic values and politics of mainstream American society and advised his followers to participate in local and

national politics (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995b), such as encouraging patriotism, authorising to vote, endorsing political figures, joining in prayers at the opening session of the US Senate and so forth (Weisman, 1976; Sheppard, 1978; Sharman, 1992; Witham, 1992). On the other hand, Minister Farrakhan remained highly critical throughout the 1980s, not only of mainstream society and political establishments, but also of conventional African American organisations and leaders (Interview, Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996; see Farrakhan, 1989, 1993). However, from the 1990s onwards Minister Farrakhan and his NOI seem to have toned down their harsh criticism and are seeking recognition from Black leaders, local and national political leaders and institutions, and also from mainstream Muslim organisations (Interview, M. Rufai, 2000).

Some of the positive contributions from Farrakhan's NOI include reducing crime in housing projects and fighting drug use and dealing (McCall, 1989; Monroe, 1990; Wright and Glick, 1990; Popkin, 1994; Sanchez, 1994). He has attempted also to improve his estranged relations with the Jewish people (Hollond, 1993; Magida, 1996) and, especially since the 1995 MMM, he has set out to build and create a good image and relations with Black leaders (Curry, 1996) and, to some degree, with political leaders as well (Novak, 1997). Moreover, he widened his national and international recognition and improved his image among Muslim leaders and organisations both nationally (Thomas, 1997; Interview Misbahu Rufai, 2000; Interview Dr Farid Muhamad, 2000)⁽³⁾ and internationally.⁽⁴⁾

8.2.3. Religious Dissatisfaction and Seekership

As shown earlier the respondents in both communities reported that they had experienced various tensions prior to their conversion. Muslims in the Imam's MAS gave more emphasis to religious and moral concerns whereas followers of the Minister pointed to socio-economic, political, racial and moral issues of AAs. Variation in their dissatisfaction and seekership patterns was also reflected. Lofland's arguments seem appropriate in explaining the diverse features of my informants' tensions and seekerships. Stark and he (1965) initially assumed religious seekership to be one of the

predisposing conditions of conversion in their process model, but later he revised this, arguing that 'people not previously religious at all have joined NRMs in noticeable numbers' (1977:815). This refined version applies to the cases of my informants' situations in both communities: the religious seeking of the Imam's followers and the socio-economic, racial, and nationalistic feelings of the Minister's followers who were not necessarily religious.

Unlike the followers of Elijah Muhammad whose criticism were generally directed against the contradictory practices and religious symbolism in the Church, the majority of my informants from these two communities indicated that they were genuinely searching for religion and spirituality. However, for the Minister's followers, socio-economic and racial experiences seemed to be connected to religious disillusionment, and questioning of the inconsistencies in beliefs and practices of the Church. To the survey question: 'What was happening in your life in terms of religion at the time you converted to Islam?' a large number of the respondents from the Imam's community, 27 out of 41 (15 females and 12 males) reported that they were not satisfied with the Church and were 'actively' (Richardson, 1985) seeking alternatives. Some were trying 'serial alternatives' (Richardson and Stewart, 1977; Richardson, 1980) and some seeking different 'metaphysical truth' (Balch and Taylor, 1977). More interestingly, the experiences of my informants from the Imam's MAS could be interpreted in the light of Lofland-Skonovd's 'conversion motifs' or 'patterns' (1981, 1983).

8.2.4. Conversion Patterns and AAM's Religious Experience

Under Conversion patterns six types of conversions are proposed: intellectual, mystical, experimental, affectional, revivalist and coercive. These are compared in terms of five variables: (1) degree of social pressure; (2) temporal duration; (3) level of affective arousal; (4) affective tone or content of conversion, and (5) the belief-participation sequence. I am particularly interested in their delineation of intellectual and experimental motifs so far as they seem to be directly relevant to my informants' cases. The intellectual motifs of conversion entail an individual becoming 'acquainted with alternative ideologies and ways of life' (Lofland and Skonovd, 1983:6) through books,

pamphlets, newspapers, radio or television. Thus intellectual conversion takes relatively longer and no pressure is felt. A reasonably high level of belief is attained prior to conversion (1983:6). The experimental pattern, on the other hand, is borne out by the prospective convert who consciously decides to participate in a movement's rituals and organisational activities (1983:10) thereby learning 'to act like a convert'. 'Genuine conviction develops later ... after intense involvement' (Balch, 1980:142) in the group's activities by observing the 'role model' (Bromley and Shupe, 1986) displayed by group members. The findings of several studies (Beckford, 1978a; Straus, 1979) show that converts describe their experience as a personal or collective accomplishment. Consider my respondents' accounts and reports of their active religious seeking and dissatisfaction. A Muslim male who was working as a retail manager before his conversion gives an account of his and his wife's seeking experiences.

Brother, I was searching for God. I was looking, I was a Buddhist, I went to Yoga, I went to different things ... So one day I said, you know, I remember when I was trying to find out this organisation [the Imam's community]. They had a radio broadcast and I used to listen to it. That's what I did, I've tuned in this radio broadcast. And when I did that, this may be 7 or 8 months after February 1975. And I heard the Fatiha in Arabbiye [Arabic]. I didn't know what it was at the time, I didn't know what language. I thought I was at the wrong station. I called my wife to come to listen. Once we worked out this must be the right station, both of us thought this must be the Qur'an. So next day was my day off ... I went to downtown Chicago to buy a copy of the Qur'an ... I got a translation by Yusuf Ali. And I began to read it and my wife began to read it. And everything that we're reading it was resonating, it was resonating in our hearts ... Now I had purchased it in my search I was looking for all of those years ... So I had a copy of a translation by Richard Burton years earlier, and it never made sense to me ... When I read the information from the NOI [during the era of Elijah Muhammad], there was more confusion. So it was when I got these things, this translation of Yusuf Ali ... I just thought that this must be for me. And it took me several more weeks to make the decision that I wanted to be part of some community. I wasn't part of the community, I never joined this Nation of Islam ... a year later I stayed in touch with this organisation [the Imam's community] basically through their newspaper. They changed this to *Bilalian News* ... (Interview, Gerard Bilal, 1999, verbatim).

Bilal also explains his personal experience and why he had gone through a long search.

Brother when I was very young person I was at Church every Sunday at least. Because my parents, my mother particularly, insisted that I must go to Church. And I must have been in 8 or 9 years old asking question about what I thought about Jesus and dying on the Cross ... One thing I remember very young is that, Jesus (Sallallahu Alehi We-sallam Peace be upon him) he was supposed to say 'O Lord, why I've taken mistakenly'. This didn't make sense to me ... When I go ask the Pastor, he said 'don't question, don't ask' and this was not satisfying me ... And once I got to the point where no longer can they [parents] force me to go to Church, you know, then I stopped of course. And I kept seeking, first seeking was through the Bible. So I used to pray, and my prayer was like this 'Oh God, guide me, give me guidance'. And I really appreciate He did that. I believe He did that. But it took several experiences, and I saw different things in those experiences that didn't appeal to me. So I kept looking ... once I found this Qur'an then the search was still there (*ibid*).

A female who works as an educational counsellor relates similar experiences to Bilal. She had been familiar with the NOI since the late 1960s but she never felt like joining although she liked and appreciated how the movement changed people's lives. She says

I reverted to the Sunni Islamic Ummah in 1982 January 17th. My reversion took place 14 years ago, however, my husband was in the NOI and then converted to the Sunni path in 1975. After I converted 14 years ago, I can see that Allah (SWT) was pulling, guiding me to Al-Islam since my teenage years. While I was very active in Church I never believed Jesus was God and I did not accept it ... I started to delve deeper into Christianity ... I was somewhat dismayed however by some inconsistencies in the Bible. I was especially troubled by the Trinity ... I questioned everything ... I began searching ... (Sister Linda Bilal, 1996, personal correspondence).

A 35 year old produce manager who did some college courses, shows the intellectual conversion pattern involved in his journey to faith. His initial interest in Islam occurred due to reading about the NOI.

I had never been a religious person because of my scientific education. I believed in a Creator but had no clear concept of my relationship with God. I was searching ... When I was still in college I was first introduced to Al-Islam by reading the book *Roots* by Alex Haley. It also introduced me to the concept of Allah and I had never heard of Him before. I then started reading about the Nation of Islam, especially Malcolm X's autobiography. And it fascinated me how devoted he was to Allah, especially after he left the Nation. Reading about Malcolm made me think about a God who did not have any physical form and limitation ... it also made me relate to those people who Malcolm referred to as Muslims (Respondent # 113).

A Muslim Minister's experience reflects experimental motifs. Although he was first introduced to Islam through the NOI he was never a registered Muslim. But he was influenced by its leadership and strong organisation.

I was a non-religious person but searching for the truth, guidance (Respondent # 121).

A self-employed retail jewellery shop owner accounts for his search prior to conversion.

I just believed in a Creator! I identified with the religion of my grandmother who was Baptist. As a child I went to Church with grandmother ... but let me tell you the truth Brother, when I reached about 16 or 17 years old I began questioning certain things in the Church. Then I felt I wasn't really convinced ... I was recovering from an injury ... 3 years prior to joining Al-Islam I was soul searching ... (Interview, Shaheed Wangara, 1995, paraphrased).

Finally, a 37 year old female cashier reports concerning her religiosity prior to joining the Imam's community.

I was just living my life without a religion. I was almost atheist but searching and questioning ... (Respondent # 135).

However, the answers from Minister Farrakhan's followers in my sample primarily relate to the individual or collective state and condition of AAs rather than to their

religious dissatisfaction which seems to have been of secondary importance for them. Rather than intellectual search patterns the respondents' seeking indicates affectional and, to some extent, experimental patterns of conversion. The affectional motif emphasises the significance of intensive interaction and affective bonds to the conversion process (Lofland and Stark, 1965). These two factors are widely viewed as being 'essential for conversion' (Snow and Phillips, 1980:444; Greil and Rudy, 1984). However, affectional conversion gives less emphasis to the cognitive dimension of recruits. Active participation comes before belief and social pressure is present (Lofland and Skonovd, 1983:13). The accounts of my informants in the Minister's NOI appear to have a low degree of the cognitive dimension of Islam and less interest in religion in general. Mostly they relate their condition and that of the Black masses' to the system and religion in which they were brought up. These circumstances have contributed to their lack of interest towards religion and their affectional feelings towards the social and economic aspects of the Minister's NOI. As experimental patterns, their accounts also reflect that they were consciously eager to participate in the NOI before joining it because of its stance on socio-economic conditions, identity and moral values of the AAs. When they observed the positive impacts of the NOI they took an experimental 'show me' attitude and were voluntarily and idealistically ready to give it a try. Consider some of my samples' comments. A 34 year old female director of educational research speaks of her disillusionment with the conditions of AAs.

Besides being disenchanted with the Church I was attending, it was just dissatisfaction about our progress as people. I was really a young and precious in my thinking. When I reflect now, I realize how far we had actually come from the days of what we call the 'Jim Crow' era. We couldn't drink from the same water fountain. Whereas now, we're even going to all White colleges now, but, but I still feel the same dissatisfaction over accomplishments and the level our people wanted ... (Sister Shelby Muhammad, 1995b, paraphrased).

A 29 year old mover remembers the psychological circumstances which he lived in.

I was angry at the system ... living in America every day we live with White racism (Respondent # 155).

A 27 year old engineer who was a Catholic prior to joining the NOI criticises religion.

I was not happy with the Church I was attending. I was questioning my religious education ... (Respondent # 154).

A 33 year old male professional indicates his idealistic intentions.

I had no interest in religion ... Just I graduated from college and was working in my chosen profession and desired to see help for serious problems facing Blacks (Interview, Richard Muhammad, 1995, paraphrased).

Similarly, a 28 year old female professional ideally refers to Black concerns.

I was searching for answers to personal questions about myself and the state of my people (Respondent # 174).

A 35 year old female training specialist bitterly expresses her dissatisfaction and criticises both religion and the state for the conditions of AAs.

I was discontented over the corruption of the Christian Church and the US government. Both were accountable for the state of my people here ... (Respondent # 168).

Finally, a 33 year old female tells how her long search ended when she joined the NOI.

I had a lot of questions about the conditions of my people. Why they're always bottom in society ... I was looking for answers, definitely not in the Church ... A blessing, finally someone who [Minister L. Farrakhan] had answers to questions I had had all my life (Respondent # 179).

As can be seen from the accounts and predispositional patterns of my informants polarisation and appeal to these two different forms of Islam occurred even prior to their conversion. In this variation there is no doubt that demographic variables and predispositional conditions take on a significant role. The position these two AA groups take towards mainstream society and the establishment, the priorities and emphases of their teachings and objectives and their organisational patterns seem to have contributed to this, because they influenced a prospective recruit's decision. These will be analysed in the next section of this chapter.

In contrast to some arguments which maintain that predisposing factors are not necessarily essential for the conversion process (Austin, 1977; Snow and Philips, 1980) a number of sociologists of religion (Gordon, 1974; Greil, 1977; Heirich, 1977; Richardson and Stewart, 1977) argue that they are significant in understanding all conversion processes. In the case of the respondents in my study, previous cognitive dispositions, religious and political tendencies appear to influence their decision making processes in choosing which African American Islamic movement to adopt. I found that this causal linkage is further strengthened by the movement's organisational patterns, teachings, recruitment strategies and networks.

8.3. Recruitment Strategies, Networks and Ideologies

As was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, a movement grows and develops within a socio-cultural and political context and then undergoes decay and change (Zald and Ash, 1966; Zald, 1970). During this process, the movement's organisational, ideological and structural features are subject to change and transformation, sometimes smooth and sometimes dramatic and radical. This is so with the NOI from 1975 onwards. These fundamental changes, naturally, affect a movement's recruitment strategies, and organisational and ideological attraction towards prospective recruits. These developments can be seen in the policies of recruitment of the two communities under study.

8.3.1. Recruitment Strategies

Recruitment strategies differ from one group to another depending on their organisational structure and ideology, as well as the objectives and priorities of the group. The two communities in my sample use different recruitment tactics. While Minister Farrakhan's NOI appears to present a sort of continuity to the NOI of Elijah Muhammad, Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS has developed different and new recruitment strategies from 1975 onwards. As with Elijah's NOI, Farrakhan's group uses different tactics to attract the Black crowds. His NOI still focuses on the glorious history of Black people, their origins, importance, and identity (Interview, Minister Farrakhan, 1996; Farrakhan, 1989; Gardel, 1996). However, unlike the old NOI, since the early 1990s Farrakhan seems to have toned down separatist and anti White rhetoric (Magida, 1996). Secondly, the NOI continues to make a positive impact among AAs because of its relatively successful and practical economic programmes on self-help, self-sufficiency and 'do for yourself' policies. Thirdly, the NOI continues to present itself as a strong organisation with strong leadership, unity and an uncompromising stance towards the protection of AAs' legitimate rights. It shows a very centralised, tightly controlled and disciplined militaristic organisational structure. Finally, just like the old NOI (see Chapter VI), its members, both male and female, follow distinctive dress codes, show dignity and discipline, manners and treatment and are thought to love

and show respect to their own kind and particularly to Black women. Consider the following comments of two Muslim professionals. A female university lecturer indicates the NOI's influence on people on the streets.

Muslims of the Nation of Islam display a good example of doing for self, hard work, Black pride, respecting and loving self and their own kind. They set also good example role models, unity, brotherly love, clean living, etc. (Interview, Dr Aminah McCloud, 1995, paraphrased).

A freelance journalist refers to the NOI's image and influence on the Black masses.

The Nation has very positive impacts on the majority of African Americans. Because it is regarded as an organisation that addresses Black concerns and speaks for the pain of Black masses (Interview, Misbahu Rufai, 1996, paraphrased).

Apart from these essential recruitment tactics that derive from the NOI's ideological and organisational patterns, from the mid-1980s onwards new recruitment techniques have been adopted. A variety of ways are used to disseminate its message, such as 'college campuses, NOI conventions, public lectures and speaking programmes, radio, television, and the Nation's publications, newspapers – *the Final Call* - and books, and tapes' (Respondent # 149).

Another female Muslim professional who works as a director of educational research for the NOI counts common grounds of recruitment.

In all walks of life, of course directly the members of the Nation do a lot of street teachings, so it is all over African American neighbourhoods, on commercial streets, on sidewalks, you know. In the neighbourhood, and then you have brothers who sell us *Final Call*, so very visible and very vocal about the Nation ... (Interview, Shelby Muhammad, 1995b, paraphrased).

The most salient recruitment strategy of the NOI is to find some common ground and shared concerns with AAs. Its officials and members strategically and carefully select topics which address common problems and talk about them in an appropriate context in order to make a strong impression on people. Minister Farrakhan, for example, talks of the NOI's recruitment policies and its mission to spread Islam among AAs, comparing its successful strategies with other Islamic communities.

Spreading Islam among Black people in this country is our primary mission. There are wonderful immigrant Muslims in this country ... seeking to improve their social and economic conditions. They're Muslims but they're not necessarily trying to proselytize Islam among the non-Muslims. So the Muslims will establish a Mosque and if it's a Mosque of Pakistanis then the khutba will be in Urdu; if it's Arabs the khutba will be in Arabic ... those who come to the Masjid won't bring visitors because visitors will never understand what's going on in the service ... because you would have to first speak to them not show them prayers. Because they're not

used to seeing prostration, they're not used to do the beauty of our prayer service. So if they saw it they may not understand what they're looking at and they may muck it. If they come and they have to sit on the floor when they used to sitting in pews and chairs. They find cultural shock. So Elijah Muhammad made it an experience that is similar to their Church experience so that you can make an easy transition from Christianity to Islam. So we sit them in the Mosque and we teach them ... (Interview, Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

Minister Farrakhan further comments on the recruitment strategy of the NOI by relating it to the historical experiences of Muslims. He maintains that the tactics the NOI uses to convert AAs to Islam are actually inspired by examples from the history of Islam. He also explains how the NOI tries to communicate with non-Muslim AAs who are predominantly Christian and religious people and eventually finds common ground between them.

Our approach to establish Islam in America is one of great tactic, strategy, and schema. And this is why the Nation of Islam is more successful than any other Islamic group in reaching people. Because God has shown us through the Honorable Elijah Muhammad how to do it. For instance, you remember when the Muslims were persecuted in Arabia they fled to Ethiopia and there the Christians gave them refuge. When a member of the Quraish came to Abyssinia or Ethiopia to prevail upon the Negus [a sixth century Abyssinian King] to send the Muslims back to Arabia, they presented a case before the Negus. And the companions of the Prophet then spoke from the Surat'ul Maryam. And when they quoted from the Surat'ul Maryam the Negus was touched. Because he said 'we Muslims believe in similar to the way he believes and so we can never send them back to be persecuted in Arabia'. Well in our study we see that as a principle, right here our Mosque is named Maryam. Why you name your Mosque Maryam? Because Mary is revered not only in the Christian world but Mary is revered by us as Muslims ... she's the only female named in the Qur'an and a chapter is given her name ... And in the Qur'an Allah refers to Isa [Jesus] now in some context as a prophet but in another contexts, it refers to Isa as Ibn-Maryam, al-Masih, the Messiah. So when the Christians know that you believe that Jesus is Messiah, Oh, there is a similarity between you and me. When I go into a Christian Church I don't go in saying 'Allah-u Akbar, Muhammad Rasululah'. That's your [Muslims] saying. If we don't speak the same language how can we communicate? Well the Christians' faith revolves around Jesus, the Muslims' faith revolves around Muhammad. When I go into a Christian Church I can't take my faith revolving around Muhammad and knock out Jesus ... So I go in and I start talking about Jesus in a minute I mentioned his name [Jesus] the Christians feel good, they say oh! Just like you would feel whenever the name Muhammad is mentioned ... (*ibid*).

He concludes his comments on the strategy of the NOI.

It is a matter of methodology ... if you're trying to communicate with people with a view of making them understand Islam and their own teaching better you have to find a method of reaching them that would not allow them to fight you ... whatever we do as Muslims we make the Christians to fight us. Because we don't let them know we believe in Jesus ... I don't go like that. And that's why I preach in Churches as much as I preach in Mosques and sometimes more so. Christian preachers ask me 'would you come and preach in my 11 o'clock service?' It's true. And when I go I don't try to get them into the Mosque, I try to get the teachings of Mosque into them ... (Interview, Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

During my field research, it was possible to see great cooperation between the Minister's NOI and other Black religious, political and cultural organisations. They work closely together to address the common concerns and problems of AAs.

Moreover, the NOI's affiliated institutions are favourite places for rank-and-file AAs and even for AA professionals to eat out and to organise activities. Therefore, these cordial relations make a positive impact on AAs and encourages them to take the NOI seriously.

However, it is impossible to say similar things about Imam W. D. Mohammed's community, the Muslim American Society (MAS). The MAS displays more decentralised and locally autonomous features. Since 1975 Imam W. D. Mohammed has introduced organisational and ideological reforms to bring his father's NOI into both mainstream Islam and American society. The movement's centralised and militaristic organisational structure have been changed (Mamiya, 1982; Marsh 1984; Tinaz, 1996). (These issues have already been examined briefly in Chapter VII). Now every local Masjid affiliated with the Imam's Ministry or the MAS has the right to govern its own local affairs. Every local Masjid tends to follow more or less the same religious, moral, socio-economic and civil values preached by Imam W. D. Mohammed in the groups' national newspaper, *The Muslim Journal*, and his books. Imam W. D. Mohammed counsels all Imams associated with his ministry. Here is an example of his guidance:

The prophet Muhammad came to us and led us in our model life as Muslims. So we want a model life as Muslims and we want the good Muslim character, we want the good Muslim industry ... Our role is to establish clearly that Muslims the same all over the world, that Muslims are one brotherhood, one community. And the beliefs of Muslims should be the same all over the world. We should believe in one God, we believe in the last prophet Muhammad, the messenger of God (PBUH). And the beginning of our consciousness is devotion to God, Taqwa, piety. So to establish this consciousness, that this is the consciousness for all Muslims and the consciousness for us ... it comes to us in the message of Qur'an and it comes to us in the teachings of the Prophet (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995b, verbatim).

Unlike Minister Farrakhan's NOI which lays claim to the ideological and organisational continuity of Elijah Muhammad's tradition, the Imam's decentralised and autonomous MAS gives rights and authority to local Masjids to enable them to use new tactics and methods to spread Islam according to their local circumstances. The Imam encourages Muslims under his ministry to establish good relations with other mainstream and immigrant Muslim communities, to patch up their differences and to be united. He also encourages Muslims in his association to become involved in local and national political, and civil activities in order to represent Muslims there (Interview, Imam W. D.

Mohammed, 1995b). As a consequence, Muslims have begun to try and influence political life (*Muslim Journal*, 15 September, 1995).

Even though the community has been restructured and decentralised, local Masjid Imams still look for guidance to the Imam, at what he is doing and in what direction he is going. Since they consider that the safest path, they follow the same direction. Aisha Mustapha, editor of *The Muslim Journal*, explains the local leaders' feelings.

They make their conscious choice, they aren't forced to do it. They are willing to align themselves with the direction of his [the Imam's] Ministry. And they want to support his Ministry to keep our community spirit alive and intact ... (Interview, Aisha Mustapha, 1999, verbatim).

Moreover, Imam W. D. Mohammed makes clear his position in the infrastructure of his community and criticises the old NOI authoritarian hierarchy and organisational structures.

They [local Imams and communities] strongly support me as their leader. And I accept that. But a leader in the past was one who made all decisions for you, I don't accept that. I make decisions for every Mosque, every Masjid, and every group of followers or for officials, I don't accept that. So what I don't accept is to be responsible for what happens in their local areas. Yeah, the administration now is local, each local place they have their own administration and their leaders are accountable to their local people. Yes, but I accept that I represent all of them and they call me their leader and they give me strong support (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995a, verbatim).

At national level, Imam W. D. Mohammed personally spreads his moderate Islamic message through his speaking engagements and public addresses which are largely held at university campuses, public leisure centres and luxury hotels. He often travels around the country and appears on television and radio programmes. In addition the community's newspaper, *The Muslim Journal*, which is available at most newsagents and bookstores in Black neighbourhoods, also aids in the community's recruitment efforts (Interview, D. Karim, 1996). However, at local level, Masjids devise their own recruitment (dawah) programmes to spread Islam and each Masjid has a Dawah Committee. The committee members, mainly in their local environment, go out to teach. A resident Imam talks about dawah (recruitment) activities in his Masjid,

We're, at present, going out on a weekly basis with *Muslim Journal*, and materials, information, Islamic materials, brochures to give out, pamphlets are still passed out in the neighborhood, to neighbours door to door, residential areas, right down the street (Interview, Imam Rabbani Mubashir, 1995, verbatim).

A professional female Muslim indicates another area of recruitment strategies.

We have our groups, they go out for teachings. We have the prison services, you know. Now legally Muslims have to be serviced in prison as a religious right. So there are Muslim Imams and Sister instructors who are allowed to go in a prison. But it [the law] says there's no one there they have obligations to go find one. Sisters or Imams, they have anyone in that prison population that says 'I want to be Muslim, identify themselves as a Muslims, the freedom of religion they have to go find someone that services their religious needs. Also the movement enters colleges and universities. There is also a movement that Islam be reinjected into African-American history ... (Interview, Aisha Mustapha, 1999, verbatim).

Sometimes local Muslim officials make efforts to be involved in the different activities of local community organisations. There they want to represent their Muslim point of view. A local resident Imam talks about his active participation.

As Muslims we make efforts ourselves by being involved in our community. I belonged to several organisations and other communities know me as a Muslim. So we tried to introduce things to them as Muslim and then the way we treat them, talk to them it makes them inquisitive. Not to say, 'oh I'm here to tell you Islam is the right religion and Christianity is wrong, you've got to accept the' ... Not that way! If there is a problem that exists in the community then I'll go in that community and offer my suggestion as a Muslim. And many times our suggestions were better than others. So that makes them inquisitive about us. It's nice, it looks good (Interview, Imam D. Karim, 1996, verbatim).

Despite their enthusiastic and evangelistic efforts, the Imam's MAS and local Masjids do not make a noise and the headlines as much as Minister Farrakhan's NOI in the media and nation-wide. This is mainly because of their moderate stance towards mainstream society and conventional beliefs. It may also be because of their localised and decentralised organisational structures. More importantly, it seems to be due to the media's reluctant interests and approaches to religious organisations which are sensational and practical (Beckford, 1995; Richardson, 1996). I assume that the media finds less interesting and less marketable to report of a moderate and conventional stance of a religious community in comparison with its huge coverage of Minister Farrakhan's NOI (Terry, 1993; see Chapter VII).

8.3.2. Recruitment Networks and Interaction

In comparison with the old NOI members' recruitment networks, my findings on these two communities give a slightly different picture. They also reflect, as indicated earlier, their neighbourhood composition. They add new phenomena to recruitment networks for AAs. Here there is no need to reiterate the arguments on the role of social or faith

networks in recruitment to NRMs and to the old NOI since they have already been discussed at length in Chapters IV and VI.

Recruitment channels to Islam in the 1980s and 1990s are diverse. Although friends' and relatives' networks are still the most important channels for my respondents' conversion to Islam in both communities, other channels are significant for their recruitment. The channels through which they encountered Islam differ between the groups. For Muslims in the Imam's community the channels most commonly indicated were 'Muslims/members activities' and 'literature' while a few marked 'media'. The Muslims in the Minister's NOI also indicated 'Muslims /members activities' and 'media' but 'literature' was less significant in their conversion. This variation is not surprising. As was indicated earlier in the section 'Religious Dissatisfaction and Seekership', the respondents in the Imam's MAS were searching intellectually and experimentally before their conversion. In the case of the informants in the Minister's NOI the impact of the strong and centralised organisational structure can be seen clearly, in the members' recruiting activities.

Table 8.12 shows the channels of recruitment of these two AAM groups. In terms of numbers in my sample, the Minister's followers appear to be more active in AA

Table 8.12. Channels through which recruits first encountered the Imam's and the Minister's communities (1978-2000)

	Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS			Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
a) Muslims/Members activities in AA neighbourhoods, prisons and colleges	4	3	7	5	4	9
b) Friends and relatives	6	5	11	5	5	10
c) Literature	4	3	7	2	1	3
d) Media	2	1	3	1	2	3
e) More than one channel	6	4	10	4	7	11
f) Others	1	1	2	0	0	0
Total	23	18	41	17	19	36

neighbourhoods, prison and colleges than the Imam's local communities. Five informants (4 in the Minister's group and 1 in the Imam's) report that they were recruited while they were in jail. Six respondents (4 in the Imam's and 2 in the

Minister's group) indicated that they met them in their local communities. Their answers are included in the friends and relatives category (see Table 8.12). As noted above, recruitment through literature is higher in the Imam's MAS than in the Minister's NOI. The other significant result is that 6 female respondents (4 in the Imam's and 2 in the Minister's group) indicate that they were recruited to Islam through marriage links; in all cases, except one, they became Muslims through their husbands. This consequence is not surprising because studies on conversion to Islam (Anway, 1996, 1998; Kose, 1996) note the importance of marriage in conversion. In her study on American female converts, Anway found that 33 out of her 53 respondents converted to Islam through marriage. The following are examples of the respondents' comments on how they encountered their community. A 46 year old merchant who is in the Imam's community reports on his encounter with Islam.

I was incarcerated, charged with armed robbery and murder. During my incarceration I heard Islam from Muslims in the Dawah committee ... (Respondent # 108).

A 25 year old housewife indicates her introduction to Islam through her husband.

I became Muslim with my husband's introduction. Because I respected him for the change he made (Respondent # 142).

A male produce manager heard of Islam through his friend.

My initial contact with Islam happened through my friend in college. He was in Five Percent NOI ... I decided to read about Islam. The more I read the more I'm interested in Islam ... (Respondent # 142).

A 21 year old college student reports an interesting recruitment channel.

I first became aware of the religion called Islam through my friend in science class who is Muslim. He generally talked about the practices and beliefs of Muslims ... I wanted to become a Muslim. I wanted to learn more about Islam. In the summer of 1995, I began getting into Internet. I had many helpful information about Islam ... (Respondent # 117).

Farrakhan's followers also give similar examples. A 35 year old editorial assistant says that,

I met Muslims at college campus when I was still a student ... filled out pledge card and went to a study group (Respondent # 179).

A 23 year old male remembers how he met the NOI.

One night while I was cruising the streets, drinking and looking for trouble, I made fateful stop at a food store where I met young brothers selling the *Final Call* outside the store ... (Respondent # 151).

Table 8.13 shows the influence of recruitment networks. It confirms my findings from

Table 8.13. Channels through which recruits became involved or developed an interest in the communities (1978-2000)

	Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS			Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
a) Through friends and relatives' introductions and invitations	6	6	12	5	7	12
b) Through introductions and invitations by Muslims/Members	4	3	7	4	4	8
c) By visiting/attending Masjid/Mosque	3	4	7	4	3	7
d) By reading and listening / literature	5	3	8	2	2	4
e) Through more than one way	4	2	6	2	3	5
f) Others	1	0	1	0	0	0
Total	23	18	41	17	19	36

Table 8.12. The most salient polarisation of my informants' responses can be seen in their reasons and motives for conversion to Islam which are different depending on their affiliation to the Imam's or the Minister's communities. This will be analysed next.

8.3.3. Motives and Reasons for Conversion

Several studies on NRMs indicate a causal link between recruits' earlier ideological dispositions and movements' philosophies and objectives (Beckford, 1975a; Rochford, 1985). As indicated earlier in this chapter 'religious dissatisfaction' and their associations with Black organisations prior to their conversion, there is a close connection between my respondents' previous concerns and the Islamic movement they joined.

My findings on motives for respondents' conversion in both communities show a polarisation of Islamic appeal and at the same time a continuity of the attractions of the old NOI when Minister's NOI is concerned. However, the motives of Muslims in the Imam's MAS are similar to the findings of other studies on conversion to mainstream Islam (Kose, 1996; Poston, 1992) and to religious movements (Beckford, 1975a; Barker, 1984; Rochford, 1985). These motives are, in general, religious and spiritual concerns and moral teachings and practices, family and conservative values, clear direction and understanding and so forth. More specifically, they stress the egalitarian

stance and racial tolerance of Islam. For those AAs who convert to the mainstream religion of Islam, it, in particular, appeals to many of them because with its clearly defined expectations it offers spiritual remedies for their moral and religious confusion, racial inequality, and violent uncertainties of inner-city life where the notion of community and family life have been strained by poverty, crime, unemployment and despair. Islam is also perceived as an alternative for Blacks who associate Christianity with slavery and racism. For them, Islam is not only a religion *per se* but it is also a way of life that offers hope, solutions and a way out for their dilemmas (Goldman 1989; Dart, 1991; Frankel; 1994; Barboza, 1995; Ribadeneira, 1996).

However, the reasons of respondents in the Minister's NOI for conversion to Islam correspond more with the motives of those people who joined the movement during Elijah Muhammad's era. Their motives show 'a structural alignment' (Rochford, 1985) with the movement's teachings and emphases on self-pride, identity, self-help, economic teachings, the uplifting of Black people, strong organisation and leadership, love for 'my people/kind', brotherhood-sisterhood, respect for Black women, discipline, responsibility, family values, etc. Religious and spiritual issues seem to have a secondary importance for them. For nationalistically, racial and ethnically motivated Muslims such as Minister L. Farrakhan's followers, Islam is rather seen, as Nyang says, 'as a cultural weapon in struggle against racism' (Stone, 1994) and 'a vehicle of protest' (Waardenburg, 1985) to boost their resistance against injustice, racial intolerance, inequality, socio-economic deprivation and the dominant values of White society.

The polarisation of my respondents' motives for conversion through the teachings and programmes of both communities is of great importance. The leaders and officials of the two communities are also factors affecting the decision-making of prospective converts in their preference to affiliate with the particular ideology of a movement.

During my 11 months field research, conducted mostly in Chicago, I observed this polarisation of Islamic appeal. Every Sunday I participated in the Minister's NOI Sunday services and sometimes in public speeches, social and cultural activities. For example, Minister Farrakhan gave a public speech at the University of Illinois at

Chicago on 22 May 1995 about the concept of manhood, creating and rebuilding a positive image of the Black man. On 17 September 1995, a guest speaker, Minister Bilal Muhammad from Miami, FL, in preparation for the MMM spoke on the mission and responsibilities of Black people and warned the audience to observe the beliefs and practices, plans and aims of the NOI for Black people. He gave the example of South Africa to show how dedication changed the unjust system there. He concluded his service by urging people to join the MMM which would be a turning point for the destiny of Black people in America. On the other hand, Minister Ishmael Muhammad who is the resident Minister of Mosque Maryam talked about the struggle of Black people to get equality in America at his service on 31 December 1995. He urged the congregation to support Minister Farrakhan's programmes and agenda to bring order, economic improvement, justice, equality and peace to all Blacks and Muslims in America. On another occasion, Minister Farrakhan conducted the service at Mosque Maryam and spoke on the status of the father in the Black family on Father's Day, 18 June 1995. He urged the congregation to be perfect fathers, mothers and ideal parents for coming generations.

However, Masjids associated with Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS such as Masjid Ar-Rahman, Masjid Al-Muminun and the Harvey Islamic Center in the Chicago area, focus on Islamic beliefs, practices and morality. During the same time period, I joined Jum'a (Friday) prayer services at these Masjids and from time to time attended their educational classes (Ta'lim courses) for Muslims at weekends and also social gatherings. The resident Imam of the Harvey Islamic Center, D. Karim, for example, on 11 August 1995, at his Friday prayer sermon (khutba) stressed the significance of communal prayer. He warned the congregation not to neglect their religious duties, such as prayer, and urged Muslims to take the Prophet's (PBUH) life style as an example - trustworthy, clean and safe. The Imam said that the Prophet's life style is the Qur'an. Then he referred to Imam W. D. Mohammed's efforts to establish a model Muslim community life inspired by the Qur'an and the practices of the Prophet Muhammad (W. D. Mohammed, 1995a, 1995b). Similarly, Imam R. Mubashir, who was the resident Imam of Masjid Ar-Rahman, on 9 September 1995, spoke on how to revive the faith and observe the 'lawful' and 'unlawful' practices in Islam. Like all Imams affiliated

with Imam W. D. Mohammed's Ministry, he often refers to the leader's writings and agenda stating that,

The Imam urges his community to be pioneers in establishing Islam, the Muslim way of life, Muslim schools, Muslim businesses with sacrifice and commitments ... Imam W. D. Mohammed also reminds teachers/educators to teach AAs to be not only good American citizens but also to be good and example Muslims ... (Khutba).

Tables 8.14 and 8.15 show the close relation between recruits' motives and the movements' teachings and emphases. They also show how both my respondents' motives and the movements' ideology and objectives engender polarisation in

Table 8.14. Informants primary motives for converting to Islam (1978-2000)

	Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS		
	Male	Female	Total
a) Allah, Our'an, religion based on truth, to please Allah, One God one humanity, clear conception of God, clear understanding of Deen (religion), better knowledge of God, Islam answers all aspect of life, spirituality, morality and moral codes, etc.	32	22	54
b) Islamic tolerance and equality, Islam preserves AA identity, ancestral religion, universal teachings, sincerity and brotherhood/sisterhood of Muslims, don't want to be a part of a religion controlled by racist Whites, natural way of believing, etc.	28	15	43
c) Clear goals, direction, meaning and purpose, simple and natural way of life, discipline, control of soul, clean and responsible life, strength, guidance, to become better person.	21	14	35
d) To feel worthy, protection, respect and honour to women and humanity, family and conservative values, marriage.	7	13	20
e) Not Applicable/Born in the community	4	8	12
Total	92	72	164

conversion to Islam. Respondents gave a wide variety of motives and I have amalgamated them into several categories, for each group, while trying to remain true to their words. There are some differences in their primary motives for joining but it is the order of priority of their motives which is the interesting factor. Because of the difference in order of priorities between the Imam's and the Minister's followers in this study, I have preferred to display their motives for conversion in two separate tables. Table 8.14 shows that for the Imam's community the majority of reasons for conversion focus on religion and related issues. This outcome is closely related to the predisposing conditions of religious dissatisfaction and seekership which led them to conversion.

A 26 year old dialysis technician counts as his major motives

Religion based on truth; clear understanding of Allah; it's a religion that first my life, coincides with my ideals and ideals of Black people; I didn't want to be part of a religion controlled by racist Whites (Respondent # 127).

A 40 year old self employed Muslim gives more personal reasons.

Gratitude to Allah; racial tolerance in Islam; desire for a more moral life; repentance (Respondent # 125).

A 42 year old freelance journalist relates his motives to the historical past.

Islam was the religion of our ancestors before slavery; Islam preserves African-American identity; Islam's racial tolerance and equality; to control my soul ... (Respondent # 122).

A 27 year old male who reports he is an international trader links all his reasons to religious issues.

Qur'an, the book in which there is no doubt; the Islamic creed one God, one humanity; universal teachings of Al-Islam; Al-Islam and the ex-slavery (Respondent #116).

A 21 year old finance intern remembers his reasons.

Discipline myself; truth; strive to please Allah; understanding (Respondent #118).

However, one young male respondent points out that there was

No reason. I am born a Muslim. To do the will of Allah (Respondent # 114).

The motives of female respondents in the Imam's MAS differ slightly from the male respondents' as far as gender issues are concerned. Besides religious issues, they also indicate reasons such as respect, protection, family and conservative values and marriage. A 36 year old self employed female gives the following reasons.

Husband; teachings Al-Islam; respect honours and dignity; clear goals and purpose (Respondent # 130).

A 40 year old management assistant names

A clear and uncomplicated way to relate to Allah; brotherhood/sisterhood in Al-Islam; protection; strength (Respondent # 141).

A 33 year old housewife states her genuine intentions, one of them being to find a decent husband.

Have a better marriage; clean and responsible life for my children; respect; to worship God-Allah (Respondent # 139).

A 48 year old professional's reasons are no different from the general female responses.

Protection; seeking peace; need to find niche in life; to serve and please Allah, Taqwa (Respondent # 129).

Another professional who works as a manager says that,

It made sense; Islam covered every aspect of life - it isn't separated; I always suspected there could only be one God; ancestral faith (Respondent # 128).

It is the same for those who were born in the community. One respondent indicates that,

The question is not applicable to my case. Because I was born a Muslim. My parents were Muslim in the Nation when I was born in 1971. With Imam W. D. Mohammed's leadership my family began practising pure Islam (Respondent # 133).

Similar motives and reasons for joining are expressed by the two groups, but as we will see the priorities of my informants in Minister Farrakhan's NOI differ from those of the Imam's MAS. Table 8.15 indicates that the respondents' motives also vary but cover a wider range of areas than the Imam's followers'. More interestingly, in contrast to those of the respondents in the Imam's community, the motives of Farrakhan's followers centre on race, identity, economic issues and the organisational patterns of the NOI rather than on religious and spiritual matters. This exhibits a continuity of the tradition of Elijah Muhammad's followers and his teachings and programmes through which Farrakhan's NOI gives more emphasis to social, moral, economic and political problems so that the movement's teachings and policies in these areas attract more people than its religious and spiritual teachings. Consequently, this suggests that a significant segment of young AAs are still discontented with their socio-economic circumstances and the system, despite improvements since Elijah Muhammad's time. Table 8.15 shows which areas of the movement appealed to the respondents in the Minister's NOI and their reasons for joining the NOI. According to Table 8.15, the NOI's traditional teachings, programmes and organisational aspects are the informants' main motives and reasons for joining the movement. These include identity, race and nationalistic teachings, 'do for self' and economic teachings and organisational patterns of the movement. However, the motives of respondents vary with gender. The male members give more priority to the issues of race, identity and nationalistic agendas, and

Table 8.15. Informants primary motives for converting to Islam (1978-2000)

	Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI		
	Male	Female	Total
a) Self-pride, knowledge of self, self-love, love my people, be yourself, find out myself, racial pride, respect of self and identity, political and nationalistic agendas, justice, equality, freedom	19	15	34
b) Do for self, self-help, economic upliftment, economic teaching, improve myself, learn to do yourself, help Min. Farrakhan, help my people, build a Nation.	18	16	34
c) Unity, strong organisation, strong leadership, sincerity, close brotherhood/sisterhood, sense of belonging.	13	14	27
d) Respect, dignity and honor to Black women, brothers and sisters, responsibility, clean life, conservative and family values, clear directions, purpose for my life, discipline.	5	11	16
e) Truth, belief in Allah, spiritual, to know God, religion, serve Allah, right teachings.	8	13	21
g) Others (miscellaneous reasons such as dietary, education, friends, dress, fun).	1	3	4
e) Not applicable/Born in the community	4	4	8
Total	68	76	144

economic teachings and programmes whereas the female Muslims indicate relatively more sensitivity to women's and family concerns and religious matters. The respondents' comments denote these differences and their general motives.

A 24 year old shipping clerk, for example, gives the traditional motto of the NOI as his reason for joining.

freedom; justice; equality; peace (Respondent # 162).

A 40 year old photographer's responses reflect the NOI's primary focus on identity.

Love my people and myself; be yourself; 'do for self'; teachings (Respondent # 153).

A 33 year old university graduate reports a

desire to see Blacks uplifted; need for greater spirituality, strong organisation; racial and ethnic pride and identity (Respondent # 153).

A 22 year old student's motives show concerns common among AA males.

Self-esteem; to learn more and help Black people; to become a part of sincere Brotherhood and the Sisterhood; there was nothing else like the Nation of Islam (Respondent # 148).

A 28 year old professional reports,

Brotherhood; help my people; obligation; improve self (Respondent # 156).

However, female respondents' motives differ slightly from males. A 40 year old sales assistant indicates the concerns common to NOI female members.

Respect to Black women; my people; knowing who I am; self sufficiency (Respondent # 167).

A 30 year old housewife explained her reasons for joining.

Find out about myself; to know God; protection and dress; dietary (Respondent # 181).

A 20 year old female bank teller said

Economic teachings; friendship/sisterhood; respect and dignity; spiritual (Respondent # 169).

A 37 year old female dental assistant's motives reflect the movement's popular rhetorics.

To help to build the Nation; to help to wake people up to who they are; to learn to do for self; to respect Black women (Respondent # 170).

Finally, the remarks of a 26 year old female who works at *Final Call*, are no different from those of other female Muslims.

Belief in Allah; wanting to help Farrakhan; building a new reality for myself; sisterhood/ respect (Respondent # 177).

The above remarks of my respondents delineate their motives for conversion. They are closely related to their groups' teachings, programmes, agendas and priorities. The recruits' responses also reflect how their early ideologies, concerns and rhetoric have been processed and refined in conformity with the movements' teachings (Beckford, 1978). The movements' orientation courses designed to make prospective recruits 'deployable agents' (Lofland and Stark, 1965), are also a source of the polarisation of interest in conversion to Islam. Therefore, it seems helpful to give brief descriptions of these two groups' distinctive orientation courses for prospective Muslims.

8.3.4. Processing Class, Ta'lim Courses, and Initiation

Prospective recruits who have heard of Islam through a variety of channels pass through several stages to become full registered members in Farrakhan's NOI or a proper Muslims in the Imam's MAS. However, the initiation process differs for the two groups. Farrakhan's NOI still follows the same procedures of induction as practised

during the Elijah Muhammad era (Interview, Misbahu Rufai, 1995, see the NOI's classical orientation procedures to movement, Sahib, 1951; Essien-Udom, 1970). However, in the Masjids affiliated with Imam W. D. Mohammed new initiation methods have been introduced.

In Farrakhan's NOI, the initiation process centres on the Mosque. My findings are based on observations at Mosque Maryam in Chicago and, on two occasions, at Muhammad Mosque #1 in Detroit; also on information collected thorough informal conversations with Muslims in the NOI and Muslim professionals. Prospective recruits are asked to visit the Mosque through direct solicitation and through the initiative of members (Interview, M. Rufai, 1995). The Mosques always have been used the most effective recruitment grounds (Lincoln, 1973) in influencing newcomers to take a step towards membership. At the entrance of the Mosque, officials register newcomers' names, addresses and telephone numbers and ask who has invited them. They are frisked, the males by the FOI and the females by the MGT staff, and they are taken inside the Mosque to be seated in chairs, unlike in traditional Mosques/Masjids where Muslims sit on the floor. The service starts with a prayer by reading the first chapter, Al-Fatiha, of the Qur'an while standing with the hands raised in the air. Sometimes Al-Fatiha is read in both Arabic and English while at other times it is read only in English. Then they move on to the main topic of the day and the service which is conducted mostly in English, drawing both on the Qur'an and the Bible. The topic of the services generally covers all aspects of the NOI's teachings, programmes and agendas. To impress newcomers the Minister and Mosque officials give examples of the NOI's achievements and programmes. While the service is still proceeding the senior Mosque members make loud exclamatory comments, such as 'teach Minister', 'teach, teach', 'that's right', 'go ahead Brother Minister', 'that's the point', 'yes sir', etc. which creates an atmosphere of excitement. In the public meetings, especially in the Mosque on Sundays, the newcomers are kept restless and excited through the impact of the speaker and the yelling of the senior Mosque members. From time to time the entire congregation stands up and claps hands to confirm and support what the Minister has said. The evangelistic style of the services, with which the majority of AAs are familiar, makes a great impact and excites newcomers. The Minister who conducts the service often refers to great

Black leaders who fought for the liberation of AAs. He reiterates over and over the NOI's teachings and programmes and asks Black Church leaders to work together to improve the conditions of AAs.

At the end of the service, the Minister asks the congregation to help the NOI and Minister L. Farrakhan's programmes. Afterwards, prospective recruits are asked if they are willing to make the step to membership. Those who are willing to join, first the women followed by the men, line up to shake hands with the Minister who represents Minister Farrakhan, or with Minister Farrakhan himself if he is there. After that, Mosque officials give a card to each prospective recruit which is called a 'Pledge Card' (see Appendix II), to be filled out and returned to Mosque secretary (Interviews, M. Rufai, 1996; Shelby Muhammad, 1995). Then the formal initiation into the movement starts. This takes several months. Prospective recruits are asked to attend 'Processing' or 'Orientation Classes' where they learn the doctrines of the NOI (the 'Supreme Wisdom', English Lesson No C1, and the NOI rules and regulations called 'restrictive laws') until they have memorised all the teachings (Interviews, Shelby. Muhammad, 1995b; M. Rufai, 1996). Minister Farrakhan explains this procedure.

we sit them [prospective recruits] in the mosque and teach them. Then after we teach them we ask them if they would accept to be Muslims. After they accept to be Muslims we put them in an orientation class where we then begin to orient them on the principles of Islam. And then they learn the prayer, and they learn fasting, and they learn Zakaat. And they learn those things that begin to make us Muslims in a practical sense (Interview, Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

In order to become an official member, the recruit has to recite the 'Supreme Wisdom' by heart in front of the Mosque officials, Minister, Captain, secretary and investigator. The same practice exists in the Jehovah's Witnesses (JW), where senior members test new recruits to approve his/her membership (Beckford, 1975a). These officials examine those who want to be Muslim. When they approve, he/she becomes a full member and a registered Muslim. He/she then writes a letter requesting (see Appendix III) a change of name to 'X', dropping the surname which was given by the slavemasters, in order to negate an imposed identity. Finally, his/her name is recorded by the mMosque registrar where he/she is affiliated (Interview # 4). In Lofland and Stark's words he/she becomes a 'deployable agent' or a 'total convert' (1965).

Name change is a sign of conversion. It is practised and has a significant role in initial entry into ISKCON. To be granted a Sanskrit name in a holy name ceremony is important as a sign of one's dedication to the movement (Pilarzyk, 1978). For NOI members, the name change is more significant of their detachment from the White man's world and of a return to their own kind, the 'Black Nation'. However, for Muslims in the NOI, the name change takes in two steps. In the first step, an 'X' is granted to those who are newly joined. In a second step, very selectively, full Muslim names are granted only to those whose dedication and commitment to the movement is clearly visible as signs of appreciation for their services (Interview, Shelby Muhammad, 1995b).

The initiation procedure to become a Muslim in the Imam's community has evolved since 1975 according to reforms and changes in its organisational structure and teachings. Current initiation processes are left to local Masjids, although there are similarities between them. Masjids' current recruitment tactics and initiation processes reflect a total break with the past and Elijah Muhammad's NOI. Now each local Masjid is accountable for its Dawah (recruitment) activities in their neighbourhoods. The organisational structure of Masjids includes Dawah committees that go out weekly in their local area with Islamic materials, mostly the *Muslim Journal* and Imam W. D. Mohammed's books and cassettes, which they give out on the streets and door-to-door missions. This is a carefully planned 'door-to-door' (Beckford, 1975b) proselytising recruitment strategy that brings significant numbers of prospective recruits to Masjids.

Unlike in Minister Farrakhan's NOI, at the Imam's Masjids the initiation process is flexible, less formal and there is no tightly controlled mechanism. The content of initiation is also fundamentally different. At Masjids courses are given on traditional Islamic beliefs and practices. A resident Imam of Harvey Islamic Center, Darnell Karim, explains the initial steps of those who want to convert to Islam.

We have, we call them the Ta'lim or Orientation courses which are designed both for new converts and Muslims in general. We have a class to teach new Muslims the basics of religion. Someone come in and say 'I wanna be Muslim, I accept Islam'. And then they go the process, they make the Shahadah. Then we've to be sensitive what's next for that person. So we figure maybe there we should introduce to other panel of Islam, the basic pillars of Islam, basic beliefs, and basic principles. And then how to apply those, the application of basic pillars starting with the prayers. Basic things we introduce new people (Interview, Imam D. Karim, 1996, verbatim).

In Ta'lim courses, there are also several classes including Arabic, Qur'anic, Islamic studies and Prayer classes. The courses are generally held at weekends, mostly on Sundays. The former resident Imam of Masjid Ar-Rahman, Mubashir gives more details about the content of the courses that a local Masjid organises.

At Masjid Ar-Rahman, we have Arabic class every Sunday morning at 10 o'clock. It is a two-hour class. And then we have Quranic studies class taught by Dr Amir Ali from 12 to 1 pm and from 11 to 12 o'clock, we have class for sisters and we have also class for youth, Islamic studies for youth. We have prayer class also at 12 o'clock for new brothers and sisters, new Muslims to know and learn the Prayer (Interview, Imam R. Mubashir, 1995, verbatim).

Name change is not as strict as for the NOI. Muslims affiliated with Masjids do not necessarily need to be registered. Most AAs who convert to mainstream Islam, such as the Muslims in the Imam's community, prefer to take Islamic names either from the Qur'an or from important figures in the history of Islam and Africa. In the early years of his leadership, Imam W. D. Mohammed wrote a book called *Book of Muslims' Names* (1976) to inspire his followers to take up Islamic names.

8.3.5. Reactions of Parents, Relatives and Friends

The responses of the parents, relatives and friends towards my respondents' recruitment to these two Muslim groups are diverse. The respondents' relatives and friends show different reactions to their conversion depending on the public perception and mass-media portrayal of these two communities, Minister Farrakhan's NOI and Imam's MAS. There is no doubt that the public perception of Islam and Muslims in general, and African-American Islam in particular, has been influenced by negative mass-media portrayal and stereotyping (Blank, 1998). Sociologists of religion have criticised the treatment of religion in the media (Beckford, 1995; Richardson and Van Driel, 1996) and maintain that the media's approach to NRMs is one-sided, biased and sensationalist.

It is surprising that even though Imam W. D. Mohammed has tried to present a positive and moderate image of Islam since the late 1970s, my respondents in his community report that they received negative, distant and sceptical reactions from their relatives and friends. On the other hand, Minister Farrakhan and his NOI have been a rich source of news and sensationalist treatment in the mass media. This is due to the mass media's

decontextualised treatment of his statements and sometimes his strong and critical rhetoric concerning Whites, the system and Jewish people (see Chapter VII). These issues, however, are not the main interest of this study but it can be seen in arguments in the works of Gardell (1996) and Magida (1996). What is interesting is that despite the mass media's negative and biased treatment towards Minister L. Farrakhan and his NOI, a large number of the relatives and friends of my respondents reacted to their recruitment to the movement positively or with progressive acceptance. It seems that their recruitment networks and grounds have something to do with their responses. The majority of respondents encountered the NOI Islam through friends and relatives and most of my informants reside in Black neighbourhoods or in Balch and Taylor's word 'social milieu' (1977). Table 8.16 shows that the responses of the parents and family members of my informants varied from one group to the other with a range from positive to negative reactions. The Imam's MAS had the largest number of respondents who reported that their parents reacted negatively, 12 out of 41 (29%). Another interesting finding reflected in Table 8.16 can be seen in the combined responses of

Table 8.16. Responses of parents and family members to conversion (1978-2000)

	Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS			Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
a) Negative	7	5	12	2	4	6
b) Positive/accepted	5	3	8	7	6	13
c) Surprised/curious	3	2	5	1	2	3
d) Mixed responses	3	4	7	2	3	5
e) Progressive acceptance	4	3	7	4	4	8
f) Neutral	1	1	2	1	0	1
Total	23	18	41	17	19	36

parents and relatives' positive, mixed or progressive acceptance attitudes. These results contrast with those given by both Elijah Muhammad's NOI and the Minister's NOI. The reactions of parents and relatives to the conversion of respondents in the Minister's NOI show continuity with the past. That is, the majority responded positively to the recruit's joining the NOI, 13 out of 36 (36%). Only 16% reacted negatively. The proportion of parents and family members who progressively come to accept the respondent's conversion to the NOI is relatively higher. This is due to the NOI's positive impact on the recruits' life style and conduct. Friends and colleagues' reactions to the respondents' conversion to Islam are similar to those of parents and family members. Table 8.17 shows that a negative response from friends is almost twice as high in the Imam's MAS

Table 8.17. Responses of friends to conversion

	Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS			Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
a) Negative	6	4	10	2	3	5
b) Positive/accepted	5	3	8	5	6	11
c) Surprised/curious	2	3	5	2	2	4
d) Mixed responses	4	4	8	3	3	6
e) Progressive acceptance	4	3	7	3	5	8
f) Neutral	2	1	3	2	0	2
Total	23	18	41	17	19	36

(24%) as in the Minister's NOI (13%). However, in both communities the combined responses of friends' positive, surprised, mixed and progressive acceptance is more or less equal. The following are accounts of the responses of relatives and friends: first, the respondents' reports from the Imam's community. For example, a 26 year old female payroll clerk in the Imam's community recalls both her parents and friends' negative reactions.

They were very angry and disappointed. Reaction of my friends was similar to family except they disassociated themselves from me (Respondent # 144).

A 37 year old female housewife reports the different reactions she received.

From my parents very negatively, I was called names, labelled, taunted etc. But from friends, a little better (Respondent # 132).

A 45 year old female manager of a therapy programme reports that,

They were not pleased and indicated this both verbally and nonverbally. My friends and relatives were surprised. My co-workers didn't know. I soon changed jobs (Respondent # 128).

Male respondents in the Imam's MAS reported similar reactions from relatives and friends.

A 26 year old dialysis technician indicated interesting reactions which reflect the mass media portrayal of AA Islam and Muslims.

My parents thought it was a 'jail-house' phase! They really hated it. My friends thought I was a Farrakhan-militant! (Respondent # 127)

A 40 year old jewellery store owner recalls,

My mother and stepfather loved my conversion to Al-Islam. But my other family members questioned my reasons for accepting Al-Islam and my conviction. My friends, on the surface,

they accepted and gradually respected my decision (Interview, Shaheed Wangara, 1995, verbatim).

A 38 year old union representative who converted to Islam when he was 18, reports similar mixed reactions.

They [my parents] accepted it readily because they knew Muslims in our neighborhoods. My friends had many questions and were concerned about my well being (Respondent # 120).

A 20 year old college student reports mixed reactions and the progressive acceptance he received.

My mother was against my conversion to Islam. She did everything in her power to prevent me from embracing Islam. She took me several times to see her pastor. Of course it was no avail ... she is still trying her best to make me become a Christian again. But my father had no problem with my conversion and interest in Islam ... But my friends were curious and asked a lot of questions about Islam. A couple of them also accepted Al-Islam when they saw changes in me (Interview # 5, paraphrased).

A 47 year old professional also remembers similar experiences.

Well, my family has always been supportive of decisions I've made in life. There were questions, and discussions, but there was ultimately support ... Most of my friends could not understand my change in life style. A few accepted Islam independent of my own decision ... (Interview, G. Bilal, 1999, verbatim).

In contrast, the respondents in the Minister's NOI report relatively positive responses, mixed responses and the progressive acceptance of their relatives and friends. For example, a 20 year old bank teller, who joined the NOI through her friends, indicates that,

They [my parents] were very excited ... For friends, it was received well by everyone I was around (Respondent # 169).

A female teacher recalls the mixed reactions she experienced.

I received both support and discouragement from my family members ... From friends, they were more cautious and sceptical (Respondent # 166).

A 23 year old college student who became Muslim through her relatives implies the importance of this in affecting attitudes.

Most of my relatives were in the Nation and Muslims. There was no problem ... For friends, no different for some, others began to distance themselves from me (Respondent # 165).

A 37 year old dental assistant, however, reports negative reactions which reflect the media's role.

They were upset because of what they were told about and heard of it by the media ... Friends were upset but after I explained to them the truth they understood (Respondent # 170).

Male respondents' reports reflect similar reactions. A 40 year old photographer indicates the overwhelming acceptance he received.

They loved the idea and what the Nation did in the past for our communities ... For friends, the same as my parents (Respondent # 161).

Another 40 year old professional reports that,

[parents] respected my decision. Did not like it at first but grew to understand it ... From friends very negative (Respondent # 159).

A 28 year old news writer at the NOI's newspaper, *the Final Call* expresses the mixed reactions he received.

[From parents] Mixed emotions. Mainly, overtly happy to concerned about my allegiance to the Nation ... From friends, mixed emotions, also supportive but distant (Respondent # 156).

A 22 year old student who joined the NOI through relatives reports positive and mixed responses.

My mother was the most happy one. My relatives were happy as well. My father was numb, neutral ... My friends were supportive. Some of them became interested in the Nation (Respondent # 148).

The above accounts of the respondents in both groups are closely related to their previous orientation as well as to the recruitment channels in which they converted to two versions of Islam.

Chapter Eight: Notes

1) Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI organised a march called the Million Man March, the biggest civil rights demonstration in the history of the USA on 16 October 1995. The primary aim of the march was to call attention to Blacks' responsibilities, conservative and family values, and morality and above all, to mobilise the Black voters to form both local and federal level influence lobbying to improve and raise problems and issues relating to AAs (Interview, Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996; and see special issue of *The Final Call* for the MMM, 16 October 1995).

2) The NOI's relations with both Muslims and Muslim organisations in the USA and the Muslim World have been discussed at length in my conference papers (see Tinaz, 1993, 1994, 1996b).

3) This is a very common experience among AAMs who convert to mainstream Islam. They first hear and learn about Islam mainly through Minister Farrakhan's NOI. During my field research I encountered several Muslims who had this kind of experience before converting to Sunni or Orthodox Islam. A young man called Abdul Vahit and his wife were members of the NOI during the late 1980s and early 1990s before joining an international Islamic Sufi movement, the Naqshibandi Haqqani Order. He said to me that the NOI is Farrakhanism. It has no religious depth or spirituality, but NOI members do positive things for young African Americans. I was told about a similar case at Harvey Islamic Centre, in a suburb of Chicago, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Imam W. D. Mohammed. Two members of the Center first heard and learned about Islam through the organisation headed by Minister Farrakhan. His emphasis on Black pride and do for self and its success in fighting drugs attracted them to join. However, when they found that the Nation's religious teachings were not believable or satisfying they left the group in favour of mainstream Islam (Interview # 2).

4) Minister Farrakhan's NOI hosted two International Islamic Leadership Conferences in Chicago in July 1997 and February 2000. A wide spectrum of Muslims, national and international scholars, political leaders and activists participated.

5) Minister Farrakhan and his officials did World Friendship and Peace tours in 1996, 1997 and 1998, visiting mostly African and Muslim countries to establish close relations and exchange views and concerns.

CHAPTER IX

Conclusions

The history of Muslims in the US is not only about immigrants seeking socio-economic opportunities in the New World but it is also about the conversion of a significant number of indigenous people, namely, the African Americans (AAs) in American society who discover a new way of life and a new belief system that satisfies their religious quest. I showed in Chapter I that there are some hypotheses that the first Muslims' arrival dates back to the pre-Colombian period (Nyang, 1988, 1993; Gomez 1994). However, the majority of Muslims arrived through the slave trade. These pre-nineteenth century Muslims left no traces of their religious practices and culture except as 'memory' (Hevieu-Lèger, 1994). In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Muslim immigrants also did not contribute to the rise of the AAMs. I have commented on the fact that when Islam began emerging among AAs it had nothing to do with the early Muslim slaves and Muslim immigrants. Rather, Islam appeared in a particular form as protest and reaction against racism and socio-economic inequalities in a religio-nationalistic way, the same as other Black religious movements (Baer, 1984; Singer, 1979, 1988).

I tried to show that the NOI, as such a movement, owed its religio-nationalistic, political and economic inspiration to two Black movements, N.D. Ali's MST and Garvey's UNIA. By the late 1920s, these two movements had lost their influence and appeal to AAs in the Black ghettos, and the NOI emerged in the same socio-economic and political milieus. As Lincoln argues, 'after more than a hundred years, "orthodox Islam" in America had not titillated the imagination of the masses, Whites or Blacks, and was scarcely known to exist before the "Black Muslims" -Elijah's Nation of Islam-proclaimed Elijah's "Message to the Black Man" in the name of Allah' (Lincoln, 1983:221). Over his forty years as leader of the NOI, Elijah Muhammad established a solid Islamic community in the US, regardless of whether it was conventional or unconventional Islam. It was his movement that made a significant impact on changing the religious landscape of the traditional Judeo-Christian American society.

In Chapter II, I presented the methods I used while collecting empirical data and showed what sort of difficulties and dilemmas I experienced. Most of the literature on the AAMs in general and the NOI in particular is based on already published materials, and there are few empirical studies, such as those by Beynon (1938), Sahib (1951), Howard (1965), Essien-Udom (1970), Lincoln (1973) and Mamiya (1982). Even these existing empirical studies, except for a few (Sahib [1951], Howard [1965] and Essien-Udom [1970]) did not analyse the NOI intensively and in depth, but covered the early history of the movement during Elijah Muhammad's era up to the early 1960s. However, much of the research presented in this thesis is an extensive analysis of the entire period of Elijah Muhammad's leadership and of his followers' demographic characteristics, recruitment procedures and religious experiences (see Chapters V and VI). Moreover, my research covered the differentiation and polarisation of Islam's appeal to AAs and showed the changes and continuity in their reasons and motives for converting either to the mainstream Islam of Imam W.D. Mohammed and a specific form and version of Islam or to a continued form of the NOI, Minister Farrakhan's community after the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975 (see Chapter VIII).

In Chapter III, I analysed, again as part of the history of the NOI, the schisms and splits that occurred in the movement during Elijah Muhammad's leadership. These issues were mostly treated controversially by the mass media and were portrayed negatively. Only a little scholarly research paid attention to them (Evanzz, 1992; Perry, 1992; Breitman, 19976). I examined schisms, divisions and infighting in the history of the NOI from sociological perspectives. Unlike the widespread understanding of schisms in the NOI, which holds that they derived largely from ideological and power struggles, I argued that they were also the result of socio-economic and organisational development, and that they produced interactional consequences. I tried to explain that at times schism disrupted and slowed down the organisational developments and the expansion of the membership. The consequences of a particular schism were examined in depth in the case of Malcolm X's defection from the NOI (see Chapter III).

My respondents' religious and conversion experiences are racially and ethnically homogeneous, distinctive and different from those posited in views of conversion and

recruitment that are widely held in the sociology of religion. In Chapter IV, I examined the prevailing theories and models of conversion and recruitment in order to find a model or theory with which to interpret the religious experiences and conversion of AAs to Islam. I noticed that their experience is distinctive and could not be fully accommodated within the accounts of religious conversion given in the sociology of religion and in studies of NRMs in general, nor within studies of conversion to Islam in particular (Poston, 1992; Anway, 1996; Kose, 1996). I realised that even general terms and concepts are problematic in describing AAMs' conversion to Islam. After analysing their responses I came to the conclusion that the most appropriate term to use in interpreting their Islamic experiences is 'reversion', which refers to their identifying themselves with the past and with their ancestors' faith and experiences; this links ideally and reconstructively to their history and experiences in the US. Since there are no theoretical arguments or approaches to the interpretation of religious experience as reversion, I first had to analyse concepts such as conversion, recruitment, alternation or alteration in order to identify the differences between them. Second, I examined major conversion and recruitment models in order to ground a theory for interpreting the conversion experiences of AAs. I concluded that it is inadequate to apply a specific theory to the case of the AAs. Instead I adopted a multivariate approach using a selection of patterns of conversion and recruitment models in the sociology of religion. I realised that no major conversion and recruitment approaches include important factors such as race, colour and ethnicity factors as far as racially and nationalistically motivated and conscious people are concerned. These elements are important determinants for the majority of my respondents' joining or converting to the NOI (see Chapters V and VI). Therefore, I had to take these elements into account while I was trying to devise my own approach. These factors are significant for religio-nationalistic and ethno-religious movements such as the NOI (Baer, 1984; Singer, 1979, 1988; Baer and Singer, 1992).

Although some sociologists of religion such as Richardson (1985) do not give importance to social and economic deprivations in conversion, my study showed that these two factors are important for respondents who converted to the NOI, particularly the AAs who joined the movement during the leadership of Elijah Muhammad (see

Chapter V and Beynon, 1938). Similarly, Singer (1988) and Baer (1974, 1984) noted that racism and socio-economic deprivation are crucial factors for religio-nationalist movements. I therefore accorded more importance to these two factors while I was analysing the empirical data.

A proper understanding of AA's conversion to Islam depends on predisposing factors such as their contextual circumstances, socio-economic deprivation or dissatisfaction, racism, nationalistic orientation and disillusionment with conventional society, religion and politics. As I argued in Chapter V these conditions were significant for the AAs who joined the NOI during Elijah Muhammad's era. My informants' previous cognitive dispositions and political, nationalistic and religious tendencies influenced their decision to accept the ideology of particular Black religio-nationalist movements. Contrary to the arguments of sociologists who have contended that predisposing conditions are not necessarily essential (Austin, 1977; Snow and Phillips, 1980) these factors contributed to and shaped my informants' understanding of Islam according to their contextual circumstances. My study showed that these contextual factors and circumstances are also crucial in the rise and growth of religio-nationalistic movements, particularly those which give more emphasis to race, ethnicity, identity, self, and socio-economic conditions (see Chapters V and VIII). The NOI, as such a movement, had found a fertile ground for recruits in these contextual circumstances (see Tables 5.1. and 8.8.)

My research indicates that there was a close linkage between the recruits' previous socio-economic conditions and political and nationalistic feelings and the movement's ideology, objectives and programmes. The majority of my respondents in the Elijah Muhammad era showed that prior to their conversion or to joining the NOI they had been involved in various Black nationalist, religious and protest movements and socio-cultural associations (see Tables 5.3 and 8.10). This involvement eased and facilitated their passage to the NOI. The other important issue that my research identified was that a large number of AAs, particularly my respondents, had been disenchanted with not only the mainstream political system and organisations but also with conventional black and civil rights organisations (see Tables 5.4 and 8.11.)

Demographic variables such as age, gender, education and occupation are important indicators that a social or religious group attracts people from a particular type of social class or stratum. My findings in Chapter V suggest that AAs who joined the NOI during Elijah Muhammad's period had distinctive demographic characteristics compared with those identified in the majority of studies of recruitment and conversion to NRMs (Barker, 1984; Beckford, 1983, 1985; Galanter, 1980). However, my respondents who converted to two different versions of Islam after 1975 (namely, Imam W. D. Mohammed's MAS and Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI) showed demographic characteristics that are different from those who converted to the old NOI. The latter's demographic characteristics were similar to those identified in studies of NRMs.

People convert to a religious movement for a variety of reasons. But conversion is not simply a religious phenomenon. Chapters VI and VIII revealed that AAs did not convert to or join the NOI or convert to Islam in Elijah Muhammad's time for religious and spiritual reasons alone. These motives were actually of secondary importance for them (Lincoln, 1973). I argued that AAs' conversion to Islam and becoming a member of the NOI was a complex phenomenon. To understand their conversion properly, I suggested that a variety of factors such as race, ethnicity, nationalistic sentiments, consciousness of identity and self and socio-economic factors had to be considered. It is possible to see similar motives and reasons among those who joined the NOI in Elijah Muhammad's period and those who joined Minister Farrakhan's NOI from the late 1970s onwards, although the AAs' socio-economic conditions and circumstances had changed and appeared to have improved in comparison with the past (Tables 6.11. and 8.15.). Less emphasis has been given to these motives for conversion in other studies of religious movements in general (Beckford, 1985; Barker, 1984; Rochford, 1985) and of conversion to Islam in particular (Poston, 1992; Anway, 1996; Kose, 1996). However, the motives of my respondents who joined or converted to the mainstream Islam of Imam W.D. Mohammed are different from those who joined the NOI. Nevertheless, they show similarities with the findings of others studies of conversion to NRMs in general and to Islam in particular (Table 8.14.). Therefore, I used three different terms for describing my respondents' conversion or religious experiences: conversion,

alternation or alteration, and reversion. I also argued that it is possible to describe their religious experience in these three terms depending on the degree of changes that they experienced in terms of identity and religion; their previous cognitive, nationalistic and race and identity consciousness orientations; and the NOI's assumptions about AAs' historical roots, identity and religion.

Recruitment to a social or religious group and its growth and increase in membership depend on its recruitment strategies. Sociologists in general and sociologists of religion in particular have argued that the recruitment strategies of religious movements derived mainly from ideological factors (Wilson, 1973; Freeman, 1979) and organisational structures and patterns (Zald and Ash, 1966; Gerlach and Hine, 1970; Bromley and Shupe, 1979; Snow *et al*, 1980). My research found that the NOI's recruitment strategies in Elijah Muhammad's period had evolved over the years. They emanated from both the ideology of the NOI and its organisational patterns, programmes and agendas. The Imam's community and Minister Farrakhan's NOI generated new recruitment tactics. To attract the Black masses the NOI in Eljah Muhammad's time a variety of strategies such as, ideology, organisational structure, practical socio-economic programmes and teachings. More importantly, the NOI emphasised its members' distinctive dress codes, the dignity, discipline and morality they displayed, their brotherly-sisterly attitudes and the friendly atmosphere they showed and the treatment and status given to the Black women. The NOI recruitment strategies and the prospective recruits' impressions of them were analysed in Chapter VI (6.2.1.) and partly also Chapter VIII for motives.

The social networks through which my respondents in the three categories were recruited are similar as far as their places of residence are concerned. When the categories are taken separately, religion can discern changes and developments over the years in the underlying networks. For example, the NOI's recruitment networks in Elijah Muhammad's era changed according to the times and the movement's organisational developments. Contrary to the arguments that pre-existing social relation and networks (Snow, *et al* 1980; Stark and Bainbridge, 1980) are very important in recruitment and conversion to a religious movement, my respondents under Elijah

Muhammad's leadership had taken the initiative to contact the NOI themselves and had been recruited through a variety of channels. Although the majority encountered the NOI through friends and relatives networks, a significant number contacted the movement without any pre-existing social ties in the 'social' or 'cultic milieus' (Balch and Taylor, 1977) of the black neighbourhoods where nationalistically and racially conscious people were concentrated (Beynon, 1938; Sahib, 1951). Apart from these two channels, my research also found that the NOI from the early 1960s to 1975 (see Table 6.3.), as a sign of its organisational development, devised careful recruitment tactics to attract the Black masses. This reflects Beckford's discussion (1975a, 1975b) that a religious movement and its members contact prospective recruits through 'carefully prepared and rehearsed' and 'door-to-door' sermon strategies, with the NOI using what they called 'Group Fishing' (Essien-Udom, 1970) in 'public places' (Rochford, 1985) in Black neighbourhoods.

The recruitment networks have not changed dramatically in the Imam's MAS and Minister Farrakhan's NOI. Relatives' and friends' networks are still important recruitment channels. But contact with Muslims and their communities tend to occur these days as a result of more than one factor (see Table 8.2.). The activities of Muslims or members are also significant since both communities' members largely reside in Black neighbourhoods, and their presence can be known without using any pre-existing networks and social ties.

The most important finding of my research on Elijah Muhammad's era was that AAs did not join the NOI for religious reasons alone (see Table 6.11.). In fact, this reason comes third in their motives. The respondents placed most emphasis on a search for identity in terms of race and ethnicity. They also stressed the importance of the NOI's socio economic teachings and programmes, and organisational patterns. However, Chapter VIII showed that the appeal and attractions of Islam were very different for my respondents who joined the Imam's MAS and for those who joined Minister Farrakhan's NOI. While the motives of Minister Farrakhan's followers appeared to show continuity with Elijah Muhammad's followers's motives, those who joined or

converted to the Imam's MAS or mainstream Islam focused more on religious beliefs, practices and spirituality.

Chapter VII described the period following Elijah Muhammad's death when the movement underwent change creating both institutionalisation and schisms. These organisational changes in the emphases and priorities of the communities were reflected in my respondents' conversion experiences. Imam W. D. Mohammed's faction moved towards mainstream Islam and mainstream American society, while that of Minister Farrakhan continued in the tradition of Elijah Muhammad. The latter began the process of mainstreaming in the early 1990s in accordance with its policy of gradualism, but the changes have not occurred radically or dramatically.

My findings need to be supplemented with further studies in the following areas. It would be interesting to investigate how and why Islam appeals differently to different races and ethnic groups. It would be important to compare the different attitudes and motives for conversion to Islam among different race and ethnic groups who converted to Islam in the West or geographical places outside the Muslim World.

It would also be worth studying religious discrimination and racial prejudice between immigrant Muslims and those who converted to Islam in the West. While immigrant Muslims appear to maintain the specific understanding of Islam of their origin of country, the indigenous Muslims or converts try to understand and interpret Islam according to their own experiences and circumstances. It would be particularly interesting to study the social relations and interactions between African American Muslims and immigrant Muslims in the USA where there are apparent differences between them in terms of, say, colour, socio-economic status, experience, dawah methods and goals, etc. (A. Muhammad, 1991). During my field research I noticed that AAMs raised the question of their disappointment with immigrant Muslims for treating them badly (see interviews with Imam R. Mubashir, 1995; Imam D. Karim, 1995; Dr A. Shabazz, 1995b). The universal character of Islam is supposed to overcome differences of race, ethnicity, colour and nationality, but in practice this is not always the result. There is a general resentment among AAMs about immigrant Muslims' attitudes towards them.

Islam appears to give more emphasis to multi-ethnicity, racial tolerance, equality, etc., but there are inter-racial, inter-ethnic, and cultural clashes and tensions at the local level, in mosques, cultural activities and communities (N. Muhammad, 1987, A. Muhammad, 1991). This dilemma is seen quite vividly in relationships between AAMs and immigrant Muslims (A. Muhammad, 1984, 1991; McCloud, 1998). For example, an African American Muslim Professor, Aminah McCloud of De Paul University in Chicago, raises these crucial and not openly discussed problems facing Muslims in the US. She criticises immigrant Muslims for not practising the ideals of Islam that they preach. On the contrary, she observes that 'there is no racism in Islam or ethnicity is second place in Islam, when in fact there is no racism in Islam but there is plenty among Muslims' (McCloud, 1994:76). She also criticises immigrant Muslims for implicit racism in the sense of desiring the conversion of whites to Islam and entirely ignoring African Americans, Hispanics and American Indians (McCloud, 1994).

Finally, further research is required on the relations between African American Muslims and African Americans in general who are affiliated with other faiths such as Christianity and Judaism. More specifically, how do religio-nationalist and political movements establish relations with people in their own ethnic and racial categories in a globalised world? What kind of relations do African American Muslims have with immigrant and mainstream Muslims and organisations, in particular, in the US but also with Muslim countries? (Tinaz, 1993). And it is also worth studying how African American Islam or Black Islam can expand beyond the borders of the USA into Black Diasporas in Canada, Western Europe, the Caribbean region, etc. in a globalised world (Tinaz, 1998, 1999, 2001).

In conclusion, the African American Muslims' conversion to Islam is not yet complete, and they are still changing and developing in the direction of mainstream of Islam and making a place for their own in the religious landscape of American society. However, their understanding and religious experience of Islam are unique and exceptional in so far as they differ from both immigrant Islam and the general conception of Islam in the Muslim World. They are trying to construct a version of Islam that suits them and addresses their circumstances and experiences as African Americans in the US. They do

not wish, or feel comfortable to, adopt a version of Islam that reflects the imported cultural, historical and traditional characteristics of other ethnic and immigrant Muslims. In search of identity African American Muslims try to give themselves a new sense of Islamic identity. For example, two prominent African American Muslim leaders represent two polar versions of Islam in the African American community: one is mainstream Islam and the other is more nationalist, social, protest-oriented and activist but in the process of making a gradual transition to mainstream Islam. However, they raise identical concerns. One of them, Imam W. D. Mohammed, asserts:

I do not like to see us sound like Turkish people, sound like Pakistani people and sound like Arabs without culture, without music, etc. That's funny. That's imitative. That's copying somebody, you're not just yourself. And that won't help us at all. I would like to see us right where we are, take best what we have and just express it as Muslims as your own (Interview, Imam W. D. Mohammed, 1995b, verbatim).

The other one, Minister L. Farrakhan, also rejects imitating and copying other Islamic understandings and criticises labelling and branding terms in religion that reflect sectarianism. Rather, he prefers to adopt an Islam ⁽¹⁾ referring to the original sources and references of religion, the Qur'an, and the Prophet's practices and examples.

I will never say I'm Sunni. I will never say I'm Shia. I will never say I'm Sufi. Because these are sects of Islam. What was the Prophet, I am a Muslim. And that's the unifying factor. If we go towards sectarianism then Satan can exploit our sectarian differences and put brother against brother. But if I'm a Muslim and recognize the Prophet as the standard of Islam and the Qur'an as root out of which Muhammad [Prophet] comes then that's the unifying factor ... (Interview, Minister L. Farrakhan, 1996, verbatim).

They are both trying to create an African American Islam which is rooted in the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad's practices in his time but which is not culturally and traditionally imported or planted in immigrant Islam. They also seek a specific version of Islam which is relevant and which addresses their situations and life in America. Therefore, their religious experiences and Islamic understanding are unique and authentic in so far as they express their experiences of life and history. However, this particular form of their Islam is not complete yet but is still in the process of making.

Chapter Nine: Notes

1) Both Imam W. D. Mohammed and Minister L. Farrakhan clarified their own Islamic understandings before the representatives and leaders of mainstream and immigrant Muslim organisations at the NOI's Saviour's Day 2000 in Chicago. This convention was a special gathering for a family reunion intended to bring together all the followers of Honourable Elijah Muhammad who had been following and affiliating with different religious traditions and organisations since the late 1970s when the major splits occurred in the community. They explained their understanding of Islam to mainstream Muslims. Both Imam W. D. Mohammed and Minister L. Farrakhan asked mainstream and immigrant Muslim leaders and organisations to help to spread Islam in America, but they requested not to impose their own understanding of Islamic methods and teachings. Particularly Minister Farrakhan said, the AAMs know the realities, problems and dilemmas of life in America (*Saviour's Day 2000 Speech*, 25 February 2000).

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GLOSSARY

Bahai: A sect in Islam founded by Bahauallah in Iran that is not accepted by mainstream Muslims and consider it as heterodox.

Ahmadiyya: A sect in Islam founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) in India and is considered by mainstream Muslims as heterodox.

Allahu Akbar: God is Great. It is generally used to praise God in religious sense but sometimes as political expression against non-Muslims.

Ameer: In Arabic it means a leader, mostly in Islamic movements and groups it is used to refer to the head of movement.

Da'wah: Literally call, invitation and summoning. In the religious sense, it is mission to exhort and proselytise people to convert or embrace Islam.

Hajj: It is one of five pillars of Islam. It is pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia. Muslims who can afford financially are supposed to visit Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia during Pilgrimage season.

Hutba: Sermon or address given specifically on Jum'a (Friday) communal and compulsory prayer.

Imam: Muslim male who leads the congregation in communal prayer in the Mosque / Masjid. The title is used for those whose leadership or example is to be followed by other Muslims. It is also used to refer to the leader of the Muslim community.

Jehad /Jihad: Striving and exertion. The struggle to be excellent in every endeavor. It is also used politically to refer to Holy War to defend Islam against non-Muslims.

Jumuah Prayer: Congregational communal and compulsory prayer performed on Fridays.

Majlis as-Shura: A council of Muslim leaders who consult with each other in community matters in the community's best interest.

Masjid: The place of worship or praying where Muslims gather to perform prayer and other ritual and communal activities.

Rasullah: The messenger of God, most it is referred to the Prophet Muhammad.

Salat: Islamic prayer performed both individually and congregationally.

Sawm: Self-restrain in the month of Ramadan, it is translated as fasting.

Shahadah: The required Islamic profession of faith, which is fundamental to declare publicly conversion. It is announcement that there is no God except Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

Shia: Literally meaning is party and faction. In religious sense, it is referred to another mainstream Muslims apart from Sunni those who believed that Ali the fourth Caliph of Islam was right successor after the death of the Prophet Muhammad.

Sufi: A Muslim mystic.

Sunna: The practices and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad.

Sunni: Muslims who follow conventional Islamic beliefs and practices. It is also used for the meaning of orthodox. It is largest branch of mainstream of Islam.

Ta'lim Courses: Instructions and courses designed to teach Islam.

Taqwa: Fear of God and piety.

Tawheed: The unity of God. The concept which means that there is no deity except Allah.

Ummah: people , community, nation in particular a community of Muslim believers.

Zakat: Compulsory charity. The mandated contribution of 2.5 % from a Muslims's earnings to help meet the financial needs of Umma.

APENDIX I

A) The List of Respondents and their Demographic Variables at the Time They Joined NOI During Elijah Muhammad's era.

<u>No</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Job</u>	<u>Education</u>
1	19	M	Postal Clerk	Some College
2	23	F	University Student	College/University
3	21	M	University Student	College/University
4	19	M	Student	High School
5	20	F	Student	Some College/University
6	27	M	Educator	Graduate
7	28	M	Dentist	University
8	26	F	Secretary	Some College
9	27	F	College Teacher	Graduate
10	28	M	Teacher	University/College
11	24	M	U.S. Military	High School/College
12	27	M	Insurance Broker	College/University
13	28	M	U.S. Navy Officer	College/University
14	23	M	Student	University/College
15	24	F	Worked at credit bureau	University/College
16	46	M	Factory worker	Elementary
17	30	F	Odd jobs	High School
18	27	M	Bus driver	Some College
19	20	M	Janitation	Some College
20	33	M	Post office clerk	Some College
21	50	F	Maid in hotel	High school
22	27	M	Packing house	Elementary
23	36	F	Secretary	Some College
24	32	F	Homemaker	Elementary
25	28	M	Factory worker	Some College
26	29	M	Car driver	High School
27	29	M	Freight pack stock checker	High School

<u>No</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Job</u>	<u>Education</u>
28	24	M	Student, Waiter	Some College
29	48	F	Machine Operator	High School
30	21	F	Homemaker	High School
31	27	M	Produce manager	Some College
32	46	M	Truck driver	Elementary
33	42	F	Seamster	High School
34	20	F	Office clerk	High School
35	27	F	Home cleaning	Elementary
36	35	M	Shipping clerk	High School
37	25	M	Painter	High School
38	31	M	Part time senior at high School	Elementary
39	24	M	Factory worker	High School
40	24	M	Welder	Some Technical College
41	25	M	Corner shop owner	Some College
42	24	M	Maintenance clerk	Some College
43	22	M	Mechanic	Some Business College
44	23	M	Clothier	Some Business College
45	28	M	U.S. Air force	High School
46	25	F	Housewife	High School
47	16	M	Student	High School
48	15	F	Student	High School
49	37	F	Wash dishes in restaurant	Elementary
50	36	M	Shoe repair	Elementary
51	37	M	Bell-Boy	High School
52	47	M	Factory worker	Elementary
53	46	M	Janitor	Elementary
54	45	M	Janitor	Elementary
55	41	F	Home cleaning	Elementary
56	40	M	Shoe repairman	Elementary
57	46	M	Bell-Boy	High School drop out
58	26	M	U.S. Army	High School
59	38	M	Odd jobs	High School drop out
60	26	M	Shipper	High School

<u>No</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Job</u>	<u>Education</u>
61	36	M	Shoe repair shop	High School drop out
62	28	M	Odd jobs	High School drop out
63	27	M	Odd jobs	High School drop out
64	25	M	Upholstery business	High School
65	31	F	Odd jobs	Elementary
66	24	M	U.S. Marines	Some College
67	24	M	Photographer	High School
68	25	F	Odd jobs	High School drop out
69	24	M	Bookkeeper	Some College
70	25	F	Unemployed	High School drop out
71	23	F	Odd jobs	Elementary
72	21	M	Student	Some College
73	32	F	Day care facilitator	High School
74	24	F	Unemployed	High School drop out
75	16	F	Student	High School
76	24	F	Telephone operator	Some College
77	31	F	Homemaker	High School
78	28	F	Day care facilitator	High School
79	15	F	Student	Some College
80	22	F	Day care facilitator	High School
81	17	F	Student	Some College
82	26	F	Substitute teacher	Some College
83	24	F	Worked in food service	High School
84	23	F	Secretary	High School
85	22	F	Student	High School
86	25	F	Factory employee	High School
87	19	F	Unemployed	High School drop out
88	16	F	Student	High School
89	19	M	Worked at laundry	Elementary
90	22	F	Unemployed	High School drop out
91	23	F	Homemaker	High School drop out
92	41	F	Nurse	Some College
93	43	M	Technician	Some College

<u>No</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Job</u>	<u>Education</u>
94	18	M	Student	High School
95	23	F	Unemployed	High School
96	22	F	Clerk at penal./Juvn. Court	Some College
97	23	M	Mechanic	High School
98	25	M	Constructor	High School
99	23	F	Homemaker	High School
100	26	M	Odd jobs	High School
101	27	M	Worked for the media	College
102	27	M	Worked part-time newspaper	College
103	21	F	Student	College/University
104	23	F	Clerk at law firm	College/University

B) The List of Respondents and their Demographic Variables at the Time They Converted to Islam in the Imam W.D. Mohammed's community.

<u>No</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Job</u>	<u>Education</u>
105	29	M	Manager at clothing company	College/University
106	26	M	Retail store manager	College/University
107	29	M	US military	Some College
108	30	M	Unemployed	High School
109	30	M	Taxi driver	Some College
110	23	M	N/A	College/University
111	23	M	Odd jobs	High School
112	21	M	Accounting clerk	College/University
113	26	M	Produce manager	Some College
114	B	M	Works at Dawa'h commitee	College/University
115	24	M	Odd jobs	High School
116	27	M	Rail road	College/University
117	16	M	Student	High School
118	20	M	Student	College/University
119	19	M	Student	Some College
120	18	M	Student	Some College
121	24	M	US military	Some College

<u>No</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Job</u>	<u>Education</u>
122	22	M	White color job	College/University
123	30	M	Engineer	College/university
124	20	M	Student	College/University
125	27	M	Student	Some College
126	24	M	Student	Some College
127	19	M	Dialyses technician	College/University
128	27	F	Consular teacher	Graduate
129	30	F	Social worker teacher	Graduate
130	27	F	Food service	Some College
131	28	F	Flight attendant	Graduate
132	32	F	Food service	High School
133	B	F	N/A	Graduate
134	26	F	Odd jobs	High School
135	28	F	Cashier	High School
136	24	F	Cook	Some College
137	24	F	Flight attendant	Graduate
138	B	F	N/A	Some College
139	20	F	Odd jobs	High School
140	42	F	Certified technician	College/University
141	30	F	Management assistant	Some College
142	24	F	Housewife	Some College
143	33	F	Printer	University
144	22	F	N/A	College/University
145	24	F	Clerk at law firm	College/University

C) The List of Respondents and their Demographic Variables at the time They Converted to Islam in Minister L. Farrakhan's NOI.

<u>No</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Job</u>	<u>Education</u>
146	21	M	Unemployed/imprisoned	High School
147	22	M	Imprisoned	High School
148	17	M	Student	College/University
149	26	M	Journalist	College/University

<u>No</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Job</u>	<u>Education</u>
150	19	M	Student	Some College
151	18	M	Drug dealer	High School
152	20	M	Unemployed	High School
153	27	M	Writer/Editor	College/University
154	27	M	Engineer	College/University
155	17	M	Mover	High School
156	19	M	Student	Some College
157	36	M	Self employed	College/University
158	40	M	Painter	High School
159	24	M	Sales representative	Some College
160	21	M	Student	Some College
161	30	M	Photographer	High School
162	21	M	Chemical operator	Some College
163	21	F	Welfare benefit	High School
164	31	F	Dentist	Graduate
165	20	F	Student	Some College
166	24	F	Teacher	Graduate
167	24	F	Housewife	Some College
168	26	F	Manager	Graduate
169	17	F	Bank teller	College/University
170	33	F	Dental nurse	Graduate
171	22	F	Unemployed/odd jobs	High School
172	23	F	Finance marketing	College/University
173	22	F	Kindergarten teacher	Some College
174	23	F	Account executives	College/University
175	22	F	Teacher	College/University
176	27	F	Educator	College/University
177	25	F	Marketing assistant	College/University
178	24	F	Supervisor	College/University
179	19	F	Student	Some College
180	22	F	Dishwasher	Some College
181	31	F	Housewife	Some College

APPENDIX II

The Pledge Card for prospective members in the Nation of Islam of Minister Louis Farrakhan

<p>THE NATION OF ISLAM MOSQUE MARYAM THE NATIONAL CENTER Believer's Pledge</p>	
I, _____,	pledge to strive to love my brothers and sisters as I love myself.
I, _____,	pledge to strive to study to improve myself spiritually, mentally, morally, physically and economically for the benefit of myself, my family and my people.
I, _____,	pledge to strive to build schools, hospitals, housing, businesses; to buy farmland and enter into international trade and commerce for the good of myself, my family and my people.
I, _____,	pledge to strive to give myself, my time, my energy and whatever I can spare of my finance to accomplish the above said.
Signature _____	Street Address _____
Date _____	City, State, Zip _____
	Telephone _____

APPENDIX III

The Nation of Islam's Traditional Membership Letter to become a registered member.

Address
City and State
Date

Mr. W. F. Muhammad
% Mr. Elijah Muhammad
9415 South Damen Avenue
Chicago Illinois 60620

Dear Saviour Allah, our Deliverer,
Who Came in the Person of Master
Fard Muhammad to Whom Praises
are due forever:

I bear witness that there is
no God but Thee and that Elijah
Muhammad is Thy Servant and
Apostle. I desire to reclaim my Own.
I desire a name from Thee. Please
give me my Original name. My slave
name is as follows:

Name (Mr Mrs or Miss)

APPENDIX IV

Interviews, Conversations and Tapes

- Elijah Muhammad, Audio-Tape, December 1967.
- Elijah Muhammad, Audio-Tape, Saviour's Day Speech 1974.
- Imam, W. D. Muhammad, 5 July 1995a; 25 December 1995b.
- Minister Louis Farrakhan, 23 June 1995; 3 January 1996.
- Minister L. Farrakhan, Million Man March Speech, Audio-Tape, October 16 1995.
- Minister L. Farrakhan, Saviour's Day 2000 Speech, 25 February 2000.
- Imam Rabbani Mubashir, 23 September 1995.
- Imam Darnel Karim, 7 August 1995; 11 January 1996.
- Dr Alaudin Shabazz, 21 August 1995a; 13 September, 1995b; 15 March 1996.
- Dr. Farid Muhammad, 26 September 1995; 11 March 2000.
- Dr Abdul Salaam, 23 August, 1995a; 27 September 1995b.
- Imam Sultan Saladidin, 4 August 1995.
- Imam Murad B. Deen, 5 April, 1997; 25 February 1999.
- D. S. Adil, 28 September 1995.
- Gerard Bilal, 2 March, 1999.
- Aisha Mustapha, 3 December 1999.
- Misbahu Rufai, 18 June, 1995; 10 January 1996; 22 April 2000.
- Shaheed Wangara, 18 August 1995.
- Shelby Muhammad, June 30 1995; 10 September 1995.
- Linda Bilal, 10 January 1996, Correspondence.
- Ali Bagdadi, 25 August, 1995; 13 June, 1999.
- Dr Yasser Muhammad, 2 April 1999.
- Zubeydah Madyun, 7 January 1996.
- Muhammad Al-Ahari: 15 June 1995; 20 November 1996.
- Minister Rasul Hakim Muhammad, 22 May 1995; 11 June 1995.
- Professor Aminah McCloud, 26 March, 1995.
- Dr Dorothy B. Fardan, 1 March 1996.
- Richard Muhammad, 17 August 1995.

Informal Interviews

- # 1 A conversation with a female educator, 25 June 1995.
- # 2 Two middle aged Muslims affiliated with the Harvey Islamic Centre, 22 December 1995.
- # 3 A sister who works as a female freelance journalist, 25 August 1995.
- # 4 A Muslim professional works as researcher, 9 September 1995.
- # 5 A young college student who is affiliated with Masjid Ar-Rahman, 4 August 1995.
- # 6 Conversation with Munir Muhammad, 9 August 1995.
- # 7 A conversation with a male Muslim professional at Masjid Ar- Rahman, 18 August 1995.
- # 8 A Muslim academic, 16 September 1995.
- # 9 A conversation with Muslim professional who works as a teacher, 18 December 1995.
- # 10 Retired former Muslim official, 10 September 1995.
- # 11 A member of the Board of Trustee of Masjid Ar-Rahman, 4 September 1999.
- # 12 A conversation with Jihad Bahaidin (interior designer), 19 August 1995.
- # 13 Exchange ideas with Prof Mathias Gardell, 30 September 1995; personal communication 17 March 1997.
- # 14 A conversation with the Business Manager of CROE, Munir Muhammad, 17 August 1995.

APPENDIX V

Survey Questionnaires

I) Survey Questionnaire for the old or ex-Nation of Islam (NOI) members joined the movement during Elijah Muhammad's era.

A. Questions about biographical data:

1. What was your age at the time you joined the Nation of Islam? a) Teenagers ____; b) 20 – 25 ____; c) 26 – 30 ____; d) 31 – 35 ____; e) 36 - 40 ____; f) 41 – 45 ____; g) 46 and over ____.
2. What is your current age? ____.
3. Gender: a) Male ____; b) Female ____.
4. What was your marital status? a) Single ____; b) Married ____; c) Widow/Widower ____; d) Divorced ____; e) Separated ____.
5. a) What was your occupation before you joined the movement? b) What is your current occupation?
6. What was your level of education? a) Elementary ____; b) High School drop out ____; c) High School ____; d) Some College courses ____; e) College/University ____; f) Graduate ____.
7. How would you describe yourself before joining the Nation? a) Religious/Conservative ____; b) Secular/Progressive ____; c) Religious/Progressive ____; d) No interest in religion ____; e) Others ____.

8. What was your religious affiliation? Which specific sect did you belong to? a) Baptist ____; b) Pentecostal ____; c) Methodist ____; d) Roman Catholic ____; e) Other ____.
9. Were you a member of any Black Organization before joining to the NOI? What was it?
10. What was the racial composition of your neighborhood? a) Predominantly black neighborhood ____; b) Mixed racial/ethnic neighborhood ____; c) Predominantly white neighborhood ____.

B. Questions about conversion processes and the accompanying experiences of the African American Muslims:

1. Were you experiencing any particular tensions/problems before joining the NOI? a) Psychological ____; b) Religious ____; c) Socio-economic (job or career) ____; d) Racial ____; e) Other ____.
2. Through which channels did you encounter the Nation of Islam and its members? a) Members ____; b) Friends and relatives ____; c) the NOI activities ____; d) Media ____; e) Others ____.
3. How did you become involved and interested in the teachings of the Nation of Islam? a) By attending meetings ____; b) Friends and relatives ____; c) by reading the NOI's literature ____; d) Others ____.
4. What were your first impressions?

5. What aspects of the Nation of Islam appealed to you most? a) Organizational ____; b) Teachings / Ideology ____; c) Programmes / Policies ____; d) All aspects of the NOI ____; e) Others ____.

6. How long did it take for you to join the Nation?: a) Immediately just after a meeting or contact with members ____; b) Several days and weeks ____; c) More than a month ____; d) A couple of years ____.

7. How did your parents and members of your family respond to your decision to become a member of the NOI? a) Negative ____; b) Positive ____; c) Surprised / curious ____; d) Neutral ____; e) Mixed responses ____; f) Progressive acceptance ____.

8. How did the people around you (your friends, colleagues and fellow-workers) react to your decision to become a member of the NOI? a) Negative ____; b) Positive ____; c) Surprised / curious ____; d) Neutral ____; e) Mixed responses ____; f) Progressive acceptance ____.

9. What were your primary reasons for joining the NOI? Please give your four important reasons; a) _____; b) _____; c) _____; d) _____.

10. When you became a member of the Nation of Islam, did you feel that there was a close connection between your existing ideas and the NOI's?

11. What did you think about the integrationist sentiments of Civil Rights movements?

II) Survey Questionnaire for Muslims in Imam W. D. Mohammed's Muslim American Society (MAS).

A. Questions about biographical data:

1. What was your age at the time you converted to Islam (the Imam W. D. Mohammed's community)? ____.
2. What is your gender? a)) Male ____; b) Female ____.
3. What is your marital status? a) Single ____; b) Married ____; c) Divorced ____; d) Widow / Widower ____; e) Separated ____.
4. What is your level of education? a) Elementary ____; b) High School ____; c) College / University ____; d) Graduate ____.
5. Occupation: a) What was your occupation before you joined the community ____; b) What do you do for a living now?
6. How would you describe yourself in terms of religion prior to becoming a Muslim?
a) Religious / Conservative ____; b) Secular / Progressive ____; c) Religious ____; d) Progressive ____; e) No interest in religion ____.
7. What specific sect did you belong to? a) Baptist ____; b) Pentecostal ____; c) Methodist ____; d) Roman Catholic ____; e) Other ____.
8. Were you a member of any Black Organization before becoming a Muslim? What was it?

9. What is the racial composition of your neighborhood? a) Predominantly black neighborhood ____; b) Mixed racial and ethnic neighborhood ____; c) Predominantly white neighborhood ____.

B. Questions about conversion processes and the accompanying experiences of the African American Muslims:

1. Were you experiencing any particular tensions/problems before joining the MAS? For example: a) Psychological ____; b) Religious ____; c) Socio-economic (job or career) ____; d) Racial ____; e) More than one ____; f) Other ____.
2. Through which channels did you encounter the MAS and Muslims? a) Muslims ____; b) Friends and relatives ____; c) Literature ____; d) Media ____; e) More than one channel ____; f) Others ____.
3. What were your first impressions?
4. How were you introduced to Islam? a) By attending Masjid / meetings ____; b) Friends and relatives ____; c) By reading literature about Islam (Imam W. D. Mohammed's books, cassettes and etc.) ____; d) Others ____.
5. How long did it take for you to convert to Islam? a) Immediately just after a meeting or contact with members ____; b) Several days and weeks ____; c) More than a month ____; d) A couple of years ____.
6. What were the primary reasons for converting to Islam? Please give your four important reasons; a) _____;
b) _____;
c) _____;
d) _____.

7. How did your parents and members of your family respond to your decision to become a Muslim? a) Negative ____; b) Positive ____; c) Surprised / curious ____; d) Neutral ____; e) Mixed responses ____; f) Progressive acceptance ____.
8. How did the people around you (your friends, colleagues and fellow-workers) react to your decision to become a Muslim? a) Negative ____; b) Positive ____; c) Surprised / curious ____; d) Neutral ____; e) Mixed responses ____; f) Progressive acceptance ____.
9. When you became a Muslim, did you feel that there was a close connection between your existing ideas and Islam's or MAS's?
10. What did you think about the integrationist sentiments of Civil Rights movements?

III) Survey Questionnaire for Muslims in the Minister Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam (NOI).

A. Questions about biographical data:

1. What was your age at the time you joined the Nation of Islam (NOI) ____?
2. Gender; a) Male ____; b) Female ____.
3. What is your marital status? a) Single ____; b) Married ____; c) Widow / Widower ____; d) Divorced ____; e) Separated ____.
4. Occupation: a) What was your occupation before you joined the NOI _____?
b) What do you do for a living now _____?
5. What is your level of education? a) Elementary ____; b) High School ____; c) College / University ____; d) Graduate ____.
6. How would you describe yourself in terms of religion prior to becoming a Muslim?
a) Religious / Conservative ____; b) Secular / Progressive ____; c) Religious ____; d) Progressive ____; e) No interest in religion ____.
7. What specific sect or denomination did you belong to? a) Baptist ____; b) Pentecostal ____; c) Methodist ____; d) Roman Catholic ____; e) Other ____.
8. Were you ever a member of any Black Organization before joining to the NOI?
What was it?
9. What is the racial composition of your neighborhood? a) Predominantly black neighborhood ____; b) Mixed racial/ethnic neighborhood ____; c) Predominantly white neighborhood ____.

B. Questions about conversion processes and the accompanying experiences of the African American Muslims:

1. Were you experiencing any particular tensions/problems before joining the NOI?
a) Psychological ____; b) Religious ____; c) Socio-economic (job or career)____; d) Racial ____; e) Other ____.

2. Through which channels did you encounter the Minister Louis Farrakhan's NOI and its members? a) Muslims ____; b) Friends and relatives ____; c) Literature ____; d) Media ____; e) More than one channel ____; f) Others ____.

3. What were your first impressions?

4. How were you introduced to NOI? a) By attending Mosque meetings ____; b) Friends and relatives ____; c) By reading literature about Islam (Minister Louis Farrakhan's tapes, speeches, books and the NOI's matereials, etc.)____; d) Others ____.

5. How long did it take for you to join to Islam? a) Immediately just after a meeting or contact with members ____; b) Several days and weeks ____; c) More than a month ____; d) A couple of years ____.

6. What were the primary reasons for joining the NOI? Please give your four important reasons:a) _____;
b) _____;
c) _____;
d) _____.

7. How did your parents and members of your family respond to your decision to become a member of the NOI? a) Negative ____; b) Positive ____; c) Surprised / curious ____; d) Neutral ____; e) Mixed responses ____; f) Progressive acceptance ____.
8. How did the people around you (your friends, colleagues and fellow-workers) react to your decision to become a member of the NOI? a) Negative ____; b) Positive ____; c) Surprised / curious ____; d) Neutral ____; e) Mixed responses ____; f) Progressive acceptance ____.
9. When you became a member of the movement, did you feel that there was a close connection between your existing ideas and NOI's?
10. What did you think about the integrationist sentiments of Civil Rights movements?